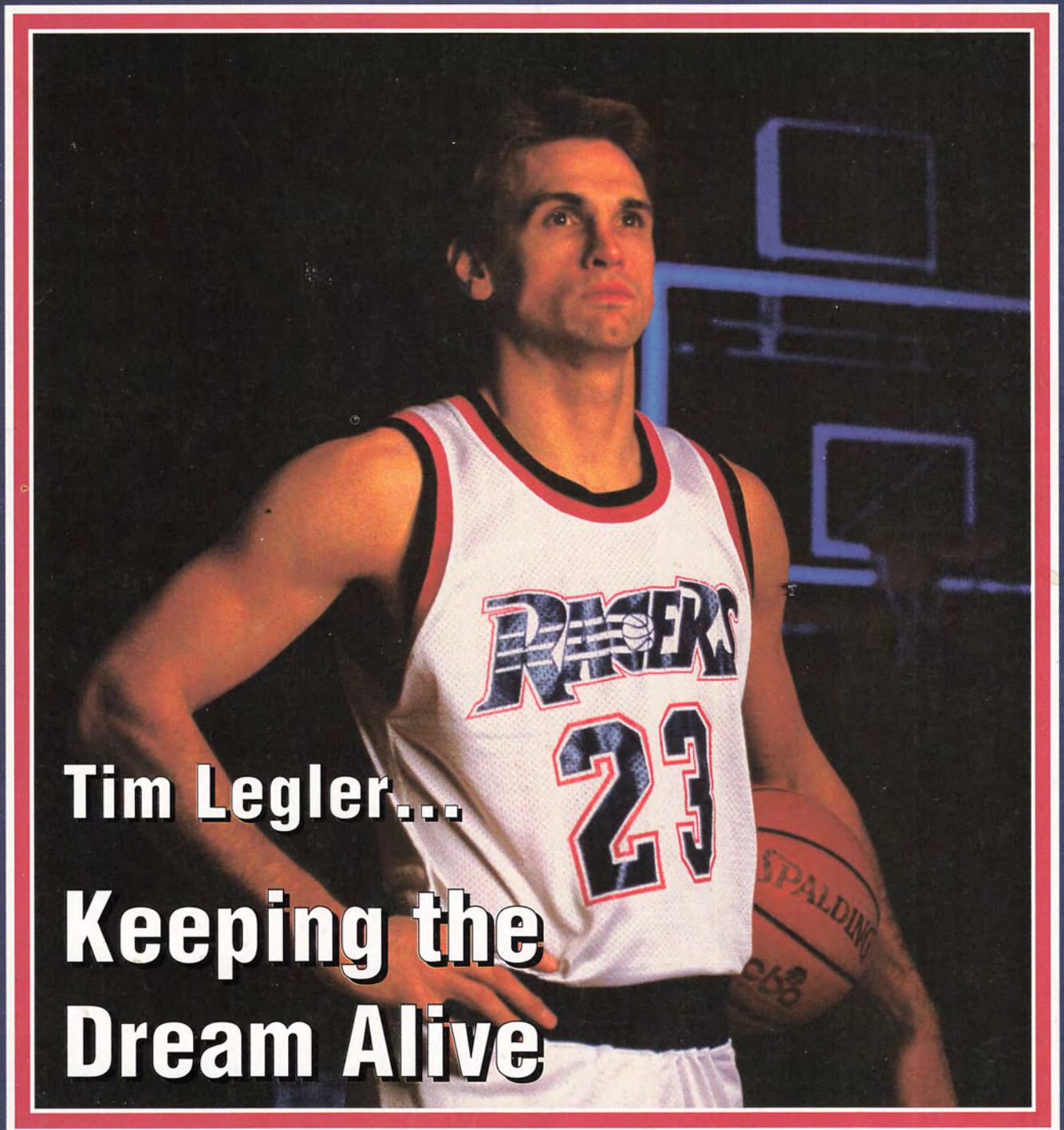
NEBRASKA
SPORTS™ Magazine
March 1995



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from the letter editor

When Nebraska sports fans chat about their favorite Cornhusker coaches, Tim Neumann's name probably comes up about as often as, well . . . any other coach few people know of.

Everyone knows Tom Osborne, Danny Nee, even Francis Allen. But Tim Neumann? Hmmm. Isn't he that redshirt I-back from Florida?

Nope. Actually, Neumann is one of the brightest stars in Nebraska's constellation of coaches.

And one of the least-recognized.

When he took the reins of a mediocre Husker wrestling team in 1986, Neumann accepted the responsibility of renovating the entire program. In the same way Bob Devaney transformed the Nebraska football program from the conference doormat into a perennial national power, Neumann has inserted the Huskers near the top of the list of the elite in collegiate wrestling.

It has been said that the only two seasons in Nebraska are football season and the off-season, during which many fans impatiently await the start of spring practice, or count the days until the preseason polls are released. To many, Husker wrestling means a short story in the morning newspaper that diverts precious column inches from news about the football team.

That's a shame, too, given the fact that the typical college wrestler is a better athlete than all but a handful of football players. At any school.

Neumann has quietly steered his teams to top-10 finishes three of the last five seasons, earned National Coach of the Year honors and coached 21 All-America selections, two individual national champions and 10 Big Eight champions.

And that was all before this season started. As of Feb. 9, the Huskers were ranked No. 3 in the nation by Amateur Wrestling News, sporting a 14-3 dual record. The team is one of the highest-ranked on campus, and one of the least-known.

Nebraska's wrestling team does not attract 76,000 people to its matches. Not even 7,600. If it did, home losses might be nonexistent. As it is, they're few and far between.

With Neumann and his assistants running the show, that probably won't change.

Chuck Green

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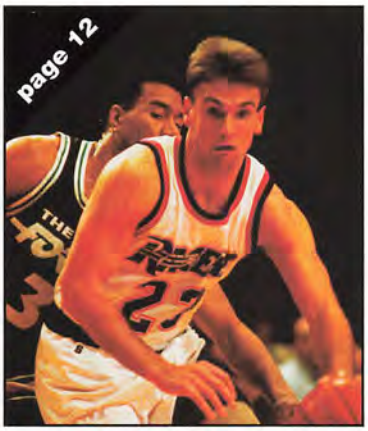

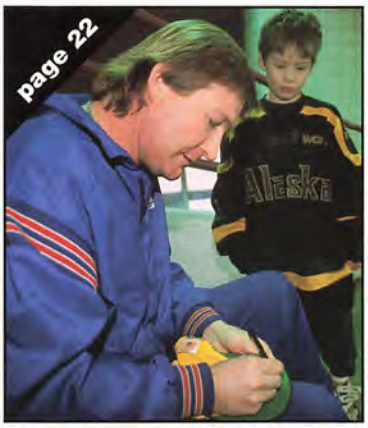

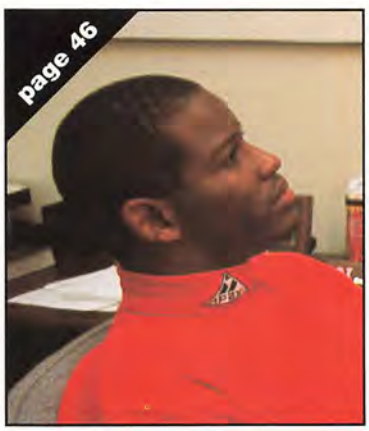

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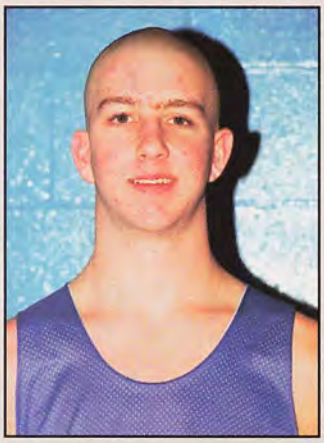
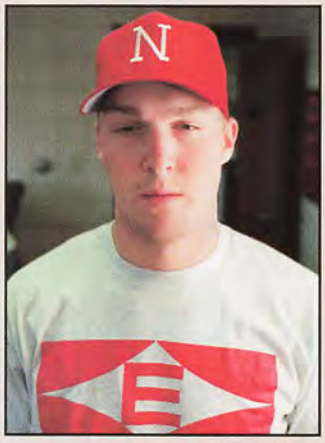
the lineup

Pyra Aarden, the center for the Nebraska women's basketball team, ranked 26th in the country in rebounding as of Feb. 3. Aarden, a 6-foot-4 junior from Hudson, Wis., averaged 10.1 rebounds per game through the Cornhuskers' first 19 games, and led the team in scoring with 14.2 points per game. Against Bowling Green, she scored a career-high 36 points and pulled down 20 rebounds.

Waterloo's **LeAnn Brietzke**, a 5-9 freshman, scored 35 points and pulled down 12 rebounds against Omaha Flanagan. Britzke hit 16 of 24 shots from the field in the 70-32 Waterloo victory, and helped out defensively with seven steals.



Matt Johnson, a starter on the Ashland-Greenwood High School boy's basketball team, tied a school record by scoring 40 points in the Bluejays' 82-65 win against Syracuse.



Darin Erstad, punter for the national champion Husker football team, is making a bigger name for himself on the baseball diamond. Erstad, an outfielder with the baseball Huskers, was named to the 1995 Mizuno preseason All-America team. Last season, Erstad hit .317 with 12 home runs and 52 runs batted in. He also stole 17 bases and made only one error in 154 chances on the field.

Honorable Mention

Even though the college football season officially ended Jan. 2, several players from the state still had at least one more game before — they hope — the beginning of their professional careers.

Husker cornerback **Barron Miles** and offensive tackle **Zach Weigert** played in the East-West Shrine Bowl in Palo Alto, Calif., Jan 14. Both players started for the West team, which won the game.

Nebraska offensive guard **Brendan Stai** and defensive tackle **Terry Connealy** appeared in the Jan. 21 Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala.

Husker linebackers **Troy Dumas** and **Donta Jones** played for the East team in the Hula Bowl in Honolulu Jan. 22, while Wayne State wide receiver **Byron Chamberlain** appeared on the West team. Chamberlain — the first Division II player to be invited to the all-star game — caught eight passes for 87 yards, including a 31-yard touchdown reception from Michigan quarterback Todd Collins. The East won 20-9.

Nebraska offensive tackle **Rob Zatechka** was awarded the Woody Hayes National Scholarship Athlete Award. The 6-5, 315-pound senior graduated last May with a biological sciences degree, and appeared on the dean's list every semester since 1991. He was the first player under Coach Tom Osborne to graduate with a perfect 4.0 grade-point average.

Nebraska Wesleyan high-jumper **Brandon Schroer** wasted no time in qualifying for the NCAA Division III Indoor Track and Field Championships. Schroer, a sophomore from Lincoln, qualified with a jump of 6 feet, 10 inches at the Ward Haylett Invitational at Doane College Jan. 14. The jump tied Schroer for third on Wesleyan's all-time list and tops his 1994 best jump by three inches.

Senior hurdler **Jennifer Guthrie** of Holdrege finished eighth in the 55-meter hurdles at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Open one week later to qualify for the women's Division III Indoor Championships.

Peru State senior **Angie Wilson** scored 19 points against Missouri Valley Jan. 16 to push her past 1,000 career points. Wilson is only the eighth player in the school's history to surpass the 1,000-point mark.

Six Omaha Lancers played in the Jan. 31 USHL All-Star Team at Ak-Sar-Ben Coliseum in front of 6,124 fans: forwards **Jerry Keefe**, **Brian Swanson** and **Brendan Walsh**, defensemen **Tom Kowal** and **Scott Swanson**, and goalie **L.J. Scarpace** played on the White team, along with players from six teams and coached by Lancers Coach Mike Hastings. Despite Brian Swanson's three goals, the Blue team won 10-8.

Papillion's **Ray Scott** won three medals at the Senior International Badminton Championships in Miami Lakes, Fla. Scott, 78, won silver medals in two

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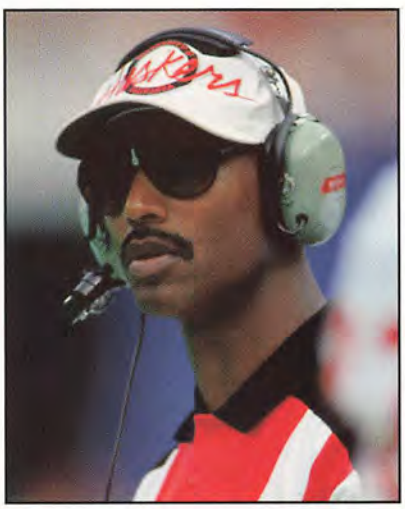

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doubles categories, and lost to his doubles partner in singles play and had to settle for the bronze.

Katie Pogge, a 1994 graduate of Omaha Duchesne Academy and a freshman basketball player for Catholic University in Washington, D.C., earned conference player of the week honors the week of Jan. 9. Pogge scored 20 points, pulled down seven rebounds and blocked two shots in her team's win over York (Pa.) College.

Malcolm High School's **Jeff Wondercheck** poured in 38 points in a 106-86 win over Milford, setting a school single-game scoring record. He connected on 14 of 17 shots from the field and hit eight free throws.

Nebraska Wesleyan's **Mike Einspahr** and Concordia's Travis Soukup were named to the NAIA All-America First Team in football. Einspahr, a senior defensive tackle from Lincoln, led the Plainsmen with 13 sacks and 12.5 tackles for losses. Soukup, a senior tight end from Seward, caught 33 passes for 663 yards and six touchdowns last season.

Biff Schofield, a senior on the Ashland-Greenwood boy's basketball team, scored 32 points and pulled down 13 rebounds in his team's 84-71 win over Bennington.

Ralston junior **Dusty Dubbs** scored 34 points in the Rams' 75-63 win over Omaha Central. He connected on 8 of 10 free throws in the game's final 1:40 to ensure the win.

Valley High School's **Brett Samson** scored 36 points in his team's loss to Scribner-Snyder, and then scored 30 points in Valley's 65-63 win over Fort Calhoun, 13 of which came in the first quarter. In one four-game stretch, the senior scored 99 points

Nebraska Wesleyan's **Jay Spearman** scored 30 points and had eight rebounds in the Plainsmen's 93-80 win over Doane College. The win was the 100th for Wesleyan Coach Todd Raridon.

The Parade Prep All-America team included two Omaha football players this year: **Ahman Green**, a running back from Omaha Central, and **Tim Ridder**, an offensive and defensive lineman from Creighton Prep. The two were among the 57 high-school players from throughout the country. Both players also were named to the USA Today and Scholastic Coach All-America teams.

Nebraska's **Paulette Mitchell** set a Husker record in the shot put with a throw of 56 feet Jan. 21 at the Nebraska Open indoor track and field meet. Mitchell, a junior, broke her own record of 54 feet, 8 inches, which she set last season.

Matt Rudloff, a sophomore on Newman Grove's basketball team, sank seven three-point shots against Leigh on his way to a 36-point night and a 78-72 win for his team.

In one four-game stretch, Ainsworth's **Kenny Bauer** pumped in 95 points, shooting 71 percent from the field and 78 percent from the free-throw line. Bauer, a junior forward, also pulled down 40 rebounds and blocked nine shots during the stretch.

Nebraska's **Peter Malesev** was named January's Big Eight Men's Track Athlete of the Month. Malesev, a senior from Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, set an NCAA automatic qualifying mark in the first meet of the year with a jump of 7 feet, 4 1/2 inches in the high jump. He then improved the mark with a leap of 7-5 against North Carolina — the third best indoor mark in school history. NSM

Attention Sport Scouts

If you know of any outstanding athletic accomplishments or performances at any level, from college to high school to youth and amateur sports, we'd like to hear about it. Drop us a note:

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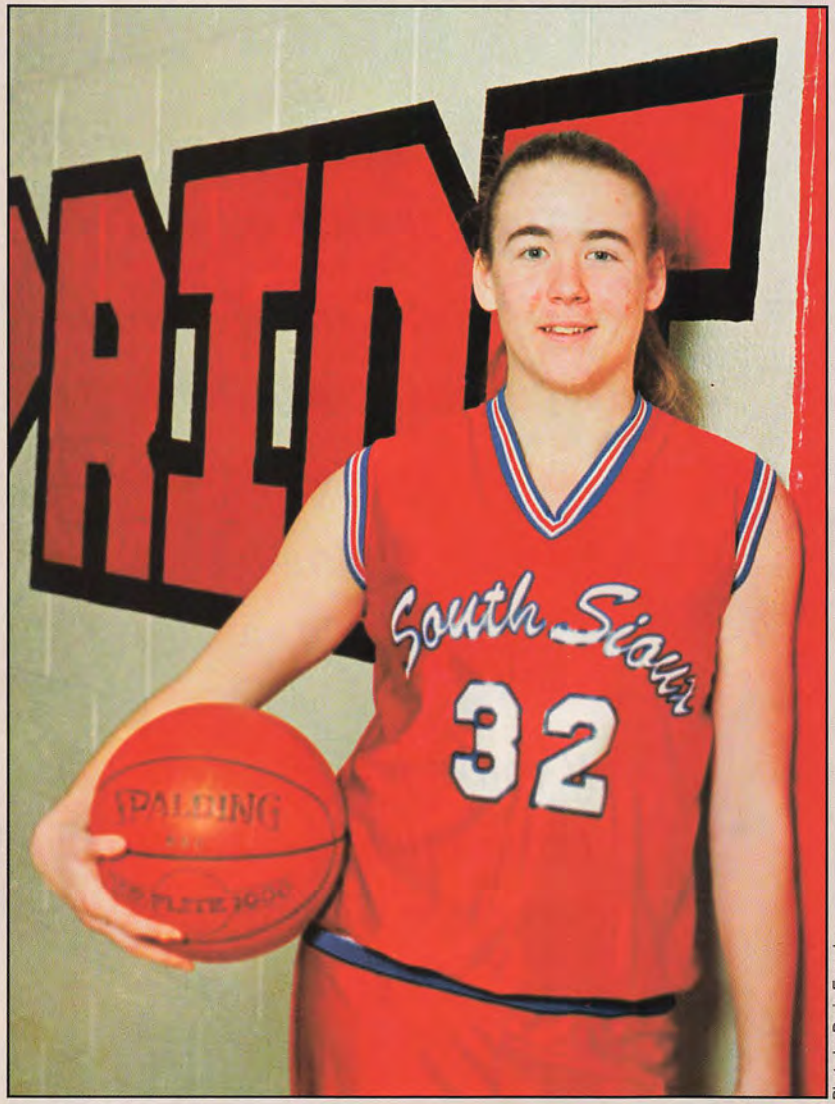

Photo by Darin Epperly

Trish Martin

by Kim Fetzich

TRISH MARTIN IS A PLAYER FOR ALL seasons. The South Sioux City High School junior keeps busy throughout the year competing in cross country, track, volleyball, soccer and basketball for the Cardinals.

Martin has earned trips to the state cross country and track meets each year since beginning high school. She had high hopes for last year's state meet, but sprained her ankle the week before the meet and was unable to perform up to her potential, she said.

In South Sioux City's 74-67 win over then-No. 1-ranked Omaha Roncalli Jan. 17, Martin scored 33 points, including 16 of the Cardinals' 17 fourth-quarter points and pulled down 14 rebounds.

Through South Sioux City's first 14 games this season, she has averaged 23.3 points and 10.9 rebounds per game. Both are team highs.

"Trish is an extremely hard worker," said Kelly Flynn, the girls' basketball coach at South Sioux City. "She's strong, plays hard and is very much a competitor."

Martin's success spills over into the classroom. She is a straight-A student, and serves as a role model for the school's younger athletes.

As far as sports are concerned, basketball is Martin's first love.

"My dad brought me up playing it," she said. "He was my coach when I was a kid."

She began playing basketball in fourth grade as a member of the boys' league in South Sioux City — on a team her father coached. At the time, no league for girls existed.

Flynn said Martin still will play a pickup game against the guys occasionally.

"If the gym is closed, you can bet Trish is outside playing with the guys," he said.

Martin, who hopes to one day be a basketball coach, wants to attend college somewhere in the Midwest — preferably one whose women's basketball program is well-established.

"Trish will be very successful," Flynn said. "Many times, when a person gets the kind of recognition that she has received recently, it goes to their head. But Trish takes it all in stride. She is a very unselfish player.

"Many times, when she could have had an uncontested layup for herself, she'll pass the ball to give someone else a chance. That's the kind of team player every team needs." NSM

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Scott Frost is Coming Home

Scott Frost, the former All-America prep quarterback from Wood River High School, has officially transferred to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and plans to play football for the Cornhuskers.

Frost said his decision was based on Stanford Coach Bill Walsh's resignation last December.

Frost, the son of former Husker wingback Larry Frost, will have to sit out next season before having two remaining years of eligibility. Nebraska quarterbacks Brook Berringer and Tommie Frazier, both of whom started during the 1994 season, are seniors next year.

Although he will not be able to play next season, Frost is allowed to practice and train with the team.

The Daily Nebraskan, the student newspaper at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, broke the story Jan. 11 by reporting that Frost had not enrolled for spring semester classes at Stanford. The paper then tracked down Frost at the Lincoln Municipal Airport when he arrived, and confirmed that he was enrolling in classes in Lincoln later that day.

At Stanford, Frost saw action as a backup quarterback and started several games at defensive back during his sophomore season. Last season, he completed 33 of 77 passes for 464 yards and two touchdowns. He also rushed for 193 yards and two touchdowns on 38 carries.

At defensive back, Frost made 22 tackles and intercepted one pass.

While playing for his father at Wood River High School, Frost generated offensive statistics that made him one of the most sought-after high school quarterbacks in the country during his senior year. He earned consensus prep All-America honors and chose Stanford over Nebraska because he wanted to play in a pro-style offense that would showcase his abilities.

Frost's brother, Steve, will remain at Stanford, where he transferred from Colorado State. He is a member of the football team.

Congratulations from the Capitol

By a 24-0 vote, Nebraska state senators approved a congratulatory resolution to honor the Husker football team and coaches for their 1994 national championship and 13-0 season.

The resolution was sponsored by 48 of the 49 senators, and was approved after the adoption of an amendment by Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha to note that the team would not have enjoyed the success it did if not for the hard work by the players.

Osborne Voted AFCA Coach of the Year

Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne has been named the 1994 American Football Coaches Association Division I-A national Coach of the Year.

Osborne, who led the Huskers to a 13-0 record and his first national title despite losing his top quarterback for most of the season — as well as his second-string quarterback for 1 1/2 games — was selected by a vote of active AFCA members, which includes coaches from Division I-A programs.

Osborne had been snubbed for Coach of the Year honors by voters from The Associated Press and USA Today/CNN in favor of Rich Brooks of Oregon. Brooks led the Ducks to their first Rose Bowl appearance in 40 years.

Osborne is the winningest active Division I-A football coach in the country, with a 219-47-3 record at Nebraska.

Nebraska Baseball Team Begins at No. 38

Nebraska's baseball team will begin the season ranked No. 38 by Collegiate Baseball magazine. The Huskers, who open their season Feb. 24 at the Gallagher Tournament in San Diego against Southern Utah, finished with 385 points in the poll.

Last season, Nebraska began the season in the No. 35 spot and went on to finish the year with a 32-28 record and third-place finish in the Big Eight Tournament.

"We are pleased to be recognized in the top 15 percent of all teams, and we will use the ranking as a motivation to climb the ladder," Nebraska Coach John Sanders said.

Jennings' Jersey Retired

The No. 51 jersey worn by Karen Jennings, a former Nebraska women's All-America basketball selection, was retired at halftime of the Nebraska-Iowa State women's game Jan. 29.

Jennings, who played from 1989 through 1993, was named the Big Eight Female Athlete of the Year and Big Eight Player of the Year during her senior season. She finished her career as the Huskers' all-time career scorer with 2,405 points.

Jennings also has been invited to the U.S. Pan American Games team trials. She and 19 other players from throughout the country will try to earn spots on Team USA during tryouts Feb. 25-27 in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The Price of Success

Less than three weeks after helping the Huskers win the national championship, Kevin Steele, Nebraska's inside linebackers coach, announced he was leaving Lincoln to accept a job with the expansion Carolina Panthers of the National Football League.

He will work as the team's defensive coordinator. Dom Capers, former Pittsburgh Steelers' defensive coordinator, has been named the Panthers' coach.

Steele, 36, coached at Nebraska for six years after a stint at Tennessee. Shortly after Nebraska's 24-17 win over Miami on Jan. 1 in the Orange Bowl, he finished as the runner-up for the coaching position at the University of Memphis.

Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said he plans to hire Steele's replacement before the start of spring practice.

Nightmare Ends for Guide Rock

With its 57-50 win over Orleans Jan. 27, the Guide Rock High School boys' basketball team ended an 87-game losing streak — the state's longest — dating back to Feb. 10, 1989.

Leading by five points with just 3.5 seconds remaining in the game, Coach Mike Henderson called a timeout to remind his players to keep their heads in the game. He said he reminded them of losing a seven-point lead with 1:49 left in a game earlier this season.

"Nobody else knows what this is like," senior Chad Rust told The Associated Press. "I stayed with it because I knew someday I would get this win. This is something we won't ever forget."

Rust and the team's other seniors had suffered through seasons with records of 0-13, 0-14 and 0-13. NSM

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Brandon Drum	OL	Columbus Scotus
Lonnie Fulton	OL	Grand Island
Ahman Green	RB	Omaha Central
Adam Julch	OL	Omaha Burke
Chad Kelsey	LB	Auburn
Aaron Wills	DL	Omaha Burke

UNO MAVERICKS

Name	Position	High School
Jason Bartling	LB	Sidney
Chris Bober	OL	Omaha South
Chris Carpenter	FB	Falls City Sacred Heart
Brian Clark	RB	Omaha Bryan
Pete Coniglio	TE	Creighton Prep
Steve Darveau	OL	Falls City Sacred Heart
Henk DeBoer	DL	Millard North
Brian Jarrett	OL	Lincoln Northeast
Micky Koory	LB	Omaha Bryan
Paul Kosel	P-K	Omaha Bryan
Tony Kreis	WR-DB	Papillion-LaVista
Curtis Miller	QB	Norfolk
Scott Piotrowski	OL	Creighton Prep
Andy Stine	OL	Gretna
Nate Sullivan	DB	Omaha South
Brooks Tapp	DB	Omaha Benson
Ed Thompson	QB	Cambridge
Ben Titus	QB	Omaha Burke
Tyrone Tyler	RB	W.D.M. Dowling
Jay Uphoff	RB	Millard North
Warren Whitted	DL	Omaha Westside
Ryan Woodward	QB	Omaha Roncalli

NEBRASKA-KEARNEY ANTELOPES

Name	Position	High School
Kyle Eberhardt	DB	Norfolk
Scott Goodell	OL	Norfolk
Tim Golka	DB	Grand Island Central Catholic
Jack Melson	DE	Grand Island
John Paul	OL	Kearney
Josh Zoucha	DL	Nofrolk Catholic

WAYNE STATE WILDCATS

Name	Position	High School
Rick Barry	DB	Chadron
Jeff Bruggeman	OL	Winside
Jason Jansen	LB	Nofrolk Catholic
Jamie Jones	QB	Hartington Ceder Catholic
Kevin Kinsella	LB	Papillion-LaVista
Damion Morrow	RB	Omaha Central
Dan Peed	OL	Ewing
Sean Taylor	OL	Omaha Roncalli

OUT-OF-STATE SIGNEES

(Iowa State)		
Mike Hanson	LB	Millard North
(Missouri Western)		
Joe Jones	WR	Omaha Benson
(Kansas)		
Jeff Redhage	DL	Lincoln East
(Notre Dame)		
Tim Ridder	OL	Creighton Prep

Remove the Deadweight

THE GROUND IS SHAKING beneath college athletics. The annual convention is too crowded with Division II and Division III schools with a vote. They shouldn't have one. They shouldn't even be invited.

When a governing body convenes to discuss rules for athletics, academic standards and financial distribution, those unaffected simply should be dismissed.

Tragically, the benefits of big-time college sports are being undermined by a powerful group of small-thinking academicians who see big-time athletics as a bane to their closed minds about education. Education is a right in this country, not necessarily a privilege. It is a privilege to choose the college of your choice and if that institution sets higher academic and entrance requirements than others, fine.

However, that institution's leaders have no right to implement their agenda on others, especially those who derive far-reaching benefits from successful, high-profile athletic teams.

Revolution is underway. The boundaries are being drawn.

Administrators, faculty representatives, coaches and athletic directors representing the big schools will position a threat to the NCAA that cannot be ignored. The threat is to bolt and form their own division with their own rules. This is not a storm cloud. It's a viable and positive solution.

Consider the current realities that confront today's athletic directors. Years ago, the athletic director was the coach, the chancellor who didn't want to lose or the guy who had been there the longest. Today's athletic director is faced with mounting pressure just to remain competitive.

The athletic department perceives this challenge as more than just finding good coaches. Today, the athletic physical plant must match and, sometimes, the sparkling new toys of the rest of the university as a whole. It's not out of bounds.

Consider that if a university is recruiting a fine music student, or a good engineering or journalism prospect, those recruiters would have no hope of getting those people unless they could convince the student that "this is the place to be." It's tough to do that if the place looks like a dump, with nothing new added since the Nixon Administration.

Consider the tremendous energy that would be expended by the Friends of the Biology Department of the Society to Preserve English booster clubs to bring in new materials to impress those students.

No one ever questions the needs in those areas, so why challenge the gym rats on the same issue?

Women's sports cannot yet pull their own weight. They still need big brother. At Nebraska, the women's basketball team probably will never attract crowds as large as the men's team does.

Eliminating men's opportunities or structures to strengthen women's programs will only result in a weaker over athletic department.

Colleges and universities are in a period of fiscal transformation. Tax dollars, the traditional source for operating funds, are much more discretionary. This country has adopted a no-tax mentality and, with local laws and propositions popping up to control government spending, appropriations for higher education are not automatic. Cuts are real. Increases are rare. College administrators, committed to excellence, must find new sources. Successful athletics are a good idea, but you also must measure what bad sports teams can do to undermine the success of any college.

Kansas State University was anchored by the biggest joke in college sports: its own football team. The Wildcats lost and lost, and then lost some more. By the university's own admission, the albatross was a growing embarrassment around the campus. Prospective students were distracted from their academic pursuits at Kansas State because of the poor showing by the football team. So the university overhauled its own attitude, invested in sports, motivated boosters and now is enjoying the benefits of not only good football but also a rejuvenation of energy throughout the campus and community.

Like it or not, a school's identity, good or bad, is largely tied to the success of its sports teams. If the boys are winning, the private dollars are available. It was the same story at the University of Massachusetts before the resurrection of the basketball there.

Because of the dollar effect of big-time sports, the polarization of big guys and little guys in the NCAA will grow more dramatic in 1995. Politicians, hereupon held at bay, are big sports fans. They hook their careers to emotion and identification with success. It will be incumbent for small-college power brokers to cut deals with their academic big brothers. The deals should include a modest sharing of television revenues in exchange for a smaller convention, fewer regulations and a relaxation of some academic requirements. Otherwise, the storm cloud will grow darker for 1996.

And those storms would be fearsome for all in college sports. NSM

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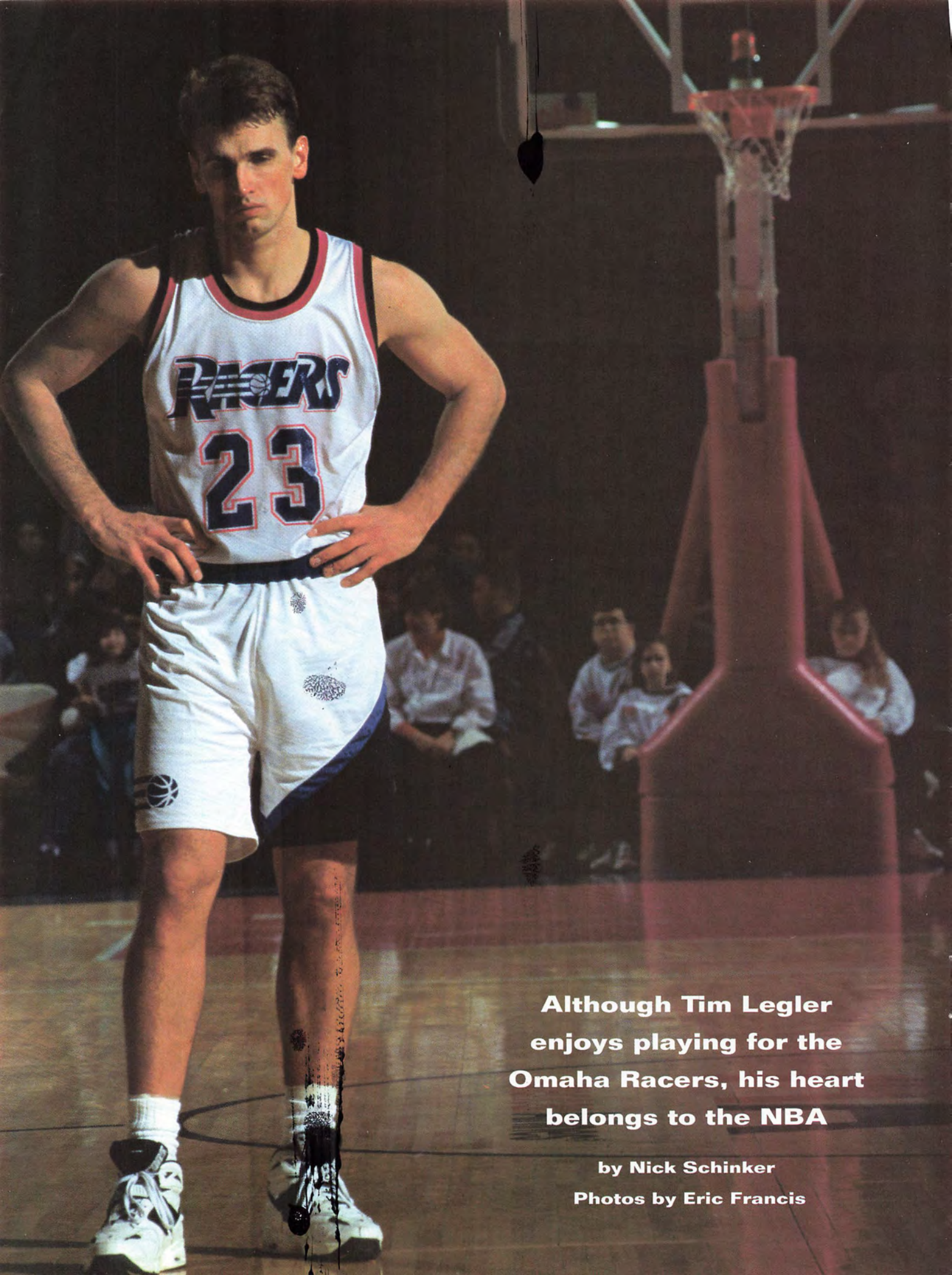
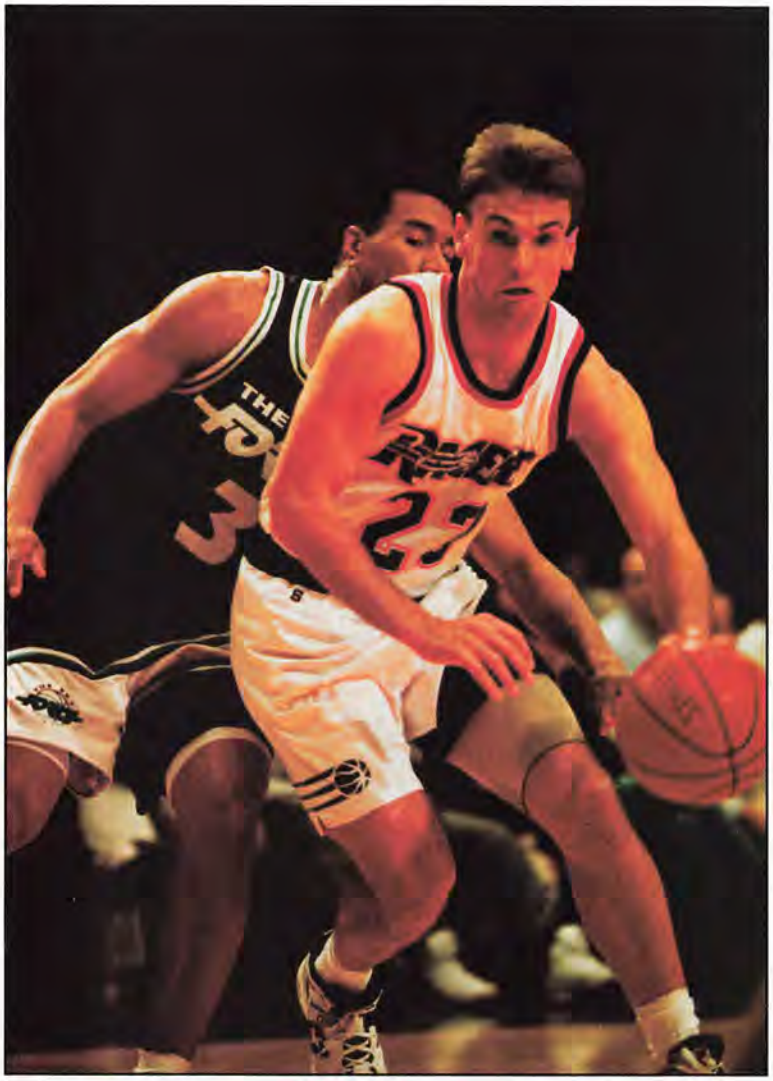


Although Tim Legler enjoys playing for the Omaha Racers, his heart belongs to the NBA

by Nick Schinker

Photos by Eric Francis

WAITING FOR THE CALL



Omaha Racers guard Tim Legler doesn't have much to say about the best game in his career. Actually, he doesn't know anything about it.

"I haven't played it yet," Legler said. "There will be a night when I'll play my best game. I'll hit 10 for 10 on my three-point shots, and I'll be hot. There was a week in college when I was 8 for 8 in one game and 7 for 7 in another, and that was probably some of the best basketball I've played.

"But, as for the best game of my career, I think it's still out there."

Best game aside, the 28-year-old Legler already is a shooting star to Racers Coach Mike Thibault.

"He's a great shooter," Thibault said. "He can really run the floor, and he's got a great understanding of the game. He's a smart player."

Thibault first saw Legler play as a senior at LaSalle University seven years ago. Since then, Thibault has seen him improve physically and mentally.

"He's become more mature and more confident," Thibault said. "He gets better every year."

Though he proudly wears the uniform of the Continental Basketball Association's Racers, Legler would rather be playing in a different league — the National Basketball Association.

Legler, 6-foot-4 and 210 pounds, is no stranger to the NBA. Four years ago, he played for the Phoenix Suns. The following year he played for Denver and Utah. The past two seasons, he played for the Dallas Mavericks, averaging 8.3 points and 1.5 assists per game. He's appeared in 133 regular-season games in the NBA.

He'd like to return to the NBA, although his most recent experience in Dallas stung worse than missing a game-winning shot at the buzzer. Getting cut didn't hurt as much as the way he found out about it.

"I got home one day and there was a message on my answering machine from a newspaper reporter in Dallas," Legler recalled. "He said he wanted my reaction to the news. I hadn't heard a thing, so I didn't know if it was good news or bad.

"I called him back and he said he was sorry to hear that the Mavs weren't picking up my option. I said I was sorry to hear that, too. He couldn't believe they hadn't called me first."

The following day, Legler received a two-paragraph form letter informing him of the decision. That was last July, and Legler still has not heard personally from anyone within the Dallas organization. Just the form letter, a devastating piece of paper he tossed in the trash that same day.

"I didn't hear anything from anyone, and that still bothers me," Legler said. "I played hard for them every single day for two years. I played so well for them. I was playing against the best in the league, and I was holding my own. And nobody has the heart . . . to give me a call, to talk to me personally and explain why it happened, what was behind the decision.

"I didn't think I deserved to be treated like that."

After Dallas, Legler packed his bags and headed to Milwaukee, where he was certain he would be signed by the Bucks. He got an apartment and began making plans with his wife, Jennifer. Then, the night before training camp was to begin, he was cut from the team.

"I was told I had a guaranteed contract with the Bucks," he said. "I get up there and find I was out of a job before it even started. I felt like somebody was telling me to change direction."

The direction proved to be west, back to Omaha, where Legler has found himself in a Racers uniform

"People have been great to Jennifer and me. I have friends here. It sounds corny, but it's like a second home. The fans here appreciate hard-working players. I hope that when they watch me, they feel they've gotten their money's worth." - Tim Legler

for the sixth time in his pro career. He is the all-time leading scorer in Racers' franchise history and has a reputation throughout the league as being one to shoot the lights out.

Midway through the season, Legler ranked second in the CBA in both three-point shooting and free-throw shooting.

On Jan. 16 against the Rockford (Ill.) Lightning, Legler connected on 17 of 21 shots from the field, including 5 of 8 from three-point range, to score a career-high 46 points. He also played in his fourth CBA All-Star Game Jan. 21, tying a league record for most appearances in the game.

Legler never has played for another CBA team, and that's just fine with the Washington, D.C., native.

"I enjoy playing here," he said. "Omaha is one of my top two favorite cities I've played in, here and Dallas. The Racers' organization is great; they've been nothing but first-class since day one. I like Omaha a lot. In Dallas, it was the city itself that I liked. Here, it's the people.

"People have been great to Jennifer and me. I have friends here. It sounds corny, but it's like a second home. The fans here appreciate hard-working players. I hope that when they watch me, they feel they've gotten their money's worth."

One of those fans is Thibault.

"Teams in the NBA complain that there's not enough shooters in the league," Thibault said. "Well, here's one sitting right here in Omaha. Tim is as good a shooter as there is in our league."

That's the trouble with a career in professional sports, Legler said: A player can work his tail off, do all he can to perfect his game, help his team win and gain some national exposure, but advancement is always up to someone else, someone who makes the decisions. Someone who may not know a particular player well enough to recognize his competitive edge, his drive and his willingness to work even harder, might be the one to chart the course of his athletic career.

"So much of what I do in my career is in someone else's hands," Legler said. "It's a cold business, a very cold business. If you're in it, great. If you're outside looking in, well, that's another story."

Though the foul taste of what happened in Dallas still lingers, he has begun to look to the future. With the NBA due to expand into Canada with teams in Toronto and Vancouver, there may be another opportunity for Legler to step up.

"I'm going to work hard and give it my best shot," he said. "This summer and all next season, if I have to. If, by the end of that season I still haven't gotten back to the NBA, I'll accept that and move on to the next challenge."

Legler isn't the only one hoping another chance is around the corner.

"I think he could play any night in the NBA," said Thibault, whose own resume includes eight

years as an assistant coach in the NBA with the Chicago Bulls and the Los Angeles Lakers. "It would be nice to see him play for a great team and top off his career with a real positive experience, something that would let him know he got everything out of his game he could get. Now, I think it's all up to the NBA. He's done everything a player can do in this league."

Legler agreed.

"If I go to the NBA and stay there for a while, maybe play five years or so, I would not come back to the CBA," he said. "I've been an all-star three times. I hold (five) franchise records. By then, I will have done all I could in this league."

The difference between the two leagues, as Legler sees it, is the game's speed.

"It's definitely faster paced in the NBA. The big guys in the NBA are really quick," he said. "When you're on the court, it's amazing how quickly things can close up around you. Believe me, if you have the ball, you have a lot less time to make a decision."

If he doesn't hear from the NBA, Legler has another avenue in mind: law school.

"There's two things I've really excelled at in life, sports and school," he said. "Back at LaSalle, I had to take business law as a requirement. The professor who taught the class, Art Shuman, was the most dynamic, fascinating person I ever met. He was a former prosecutor and he filled his classes with stories of actual cases. After that, any chance I had to take an elective, I took a law class."

Legler said he thought his being out of school since 1988 could be a problem, until he talked to Shuman.

"He said I'd be a great lawyer and that he'd help me any way he can," Legler said. "I'm going to spend part of the summer with (Shuman) devising my game plan."

A career in law may be an odd aspiration for a professional basketball player, but not for Legler.

"I really take a stand on things, on what I really believe in," he said. "I'm never gray about anything; it's always black or white. I'll take a stand and I'll fight for it. With law, it's a profession where you're not only allowed to be that way, you should be that way. It's competitive and intense."

For Legler, quitting basketball and going back to school would not be giving up. He has never walked away from a challenge on the basketball court. A career in law means the challenge will be in the courtroom instead.

"Even if I never get back to the NBA, I can be extremely proud of what I've done," he said. "Either way, I still feel a whole part of my life is out there, waiting for me." ■

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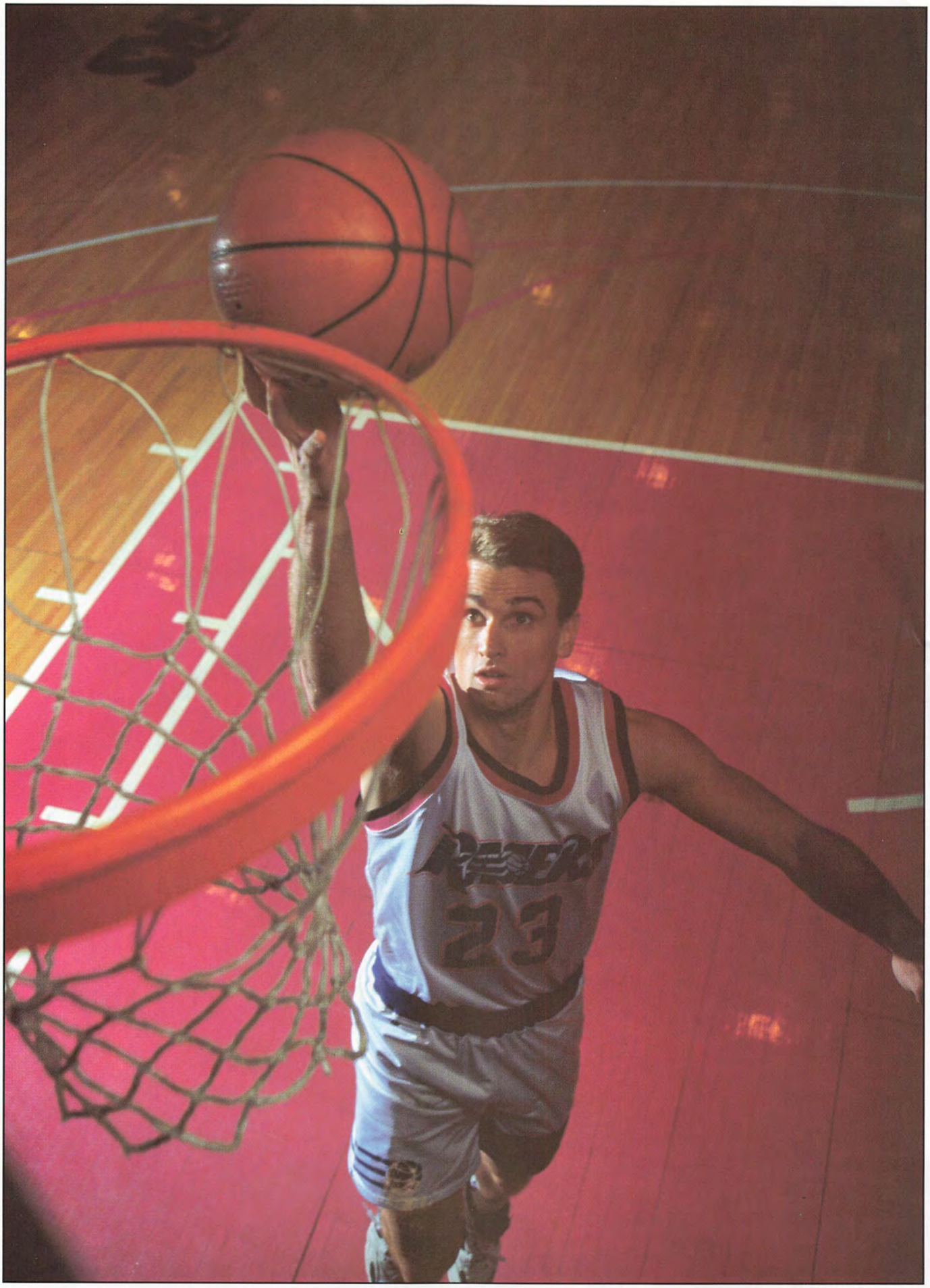
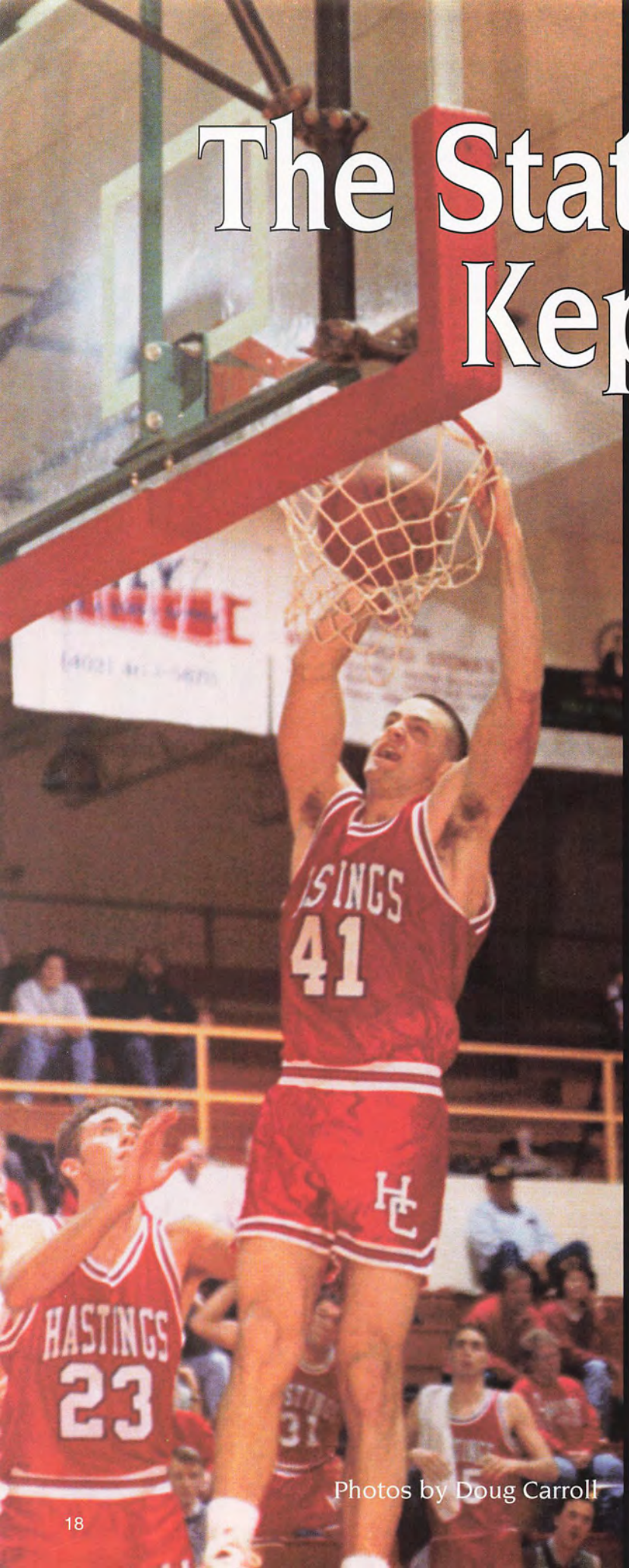

23

The State's Best-Kept Secret

Hastings College has one of the best men's basketball teams in Division II - pass it on

by Mark Derowitsch



Photos by Doug Carroll

The king of Nebraska football may be from Hastings, but basketball rules in the south-central Nebraska city.

Last January, when Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne — Hastings' favorite son — was leading the Cornhusker football team to its first national championship in 24 years, the Hastings College men's basketball team was quietly making an impressive climb up the NAIA Division II rankings ladder.

The Broncos, who began the season with a 13-game win streak, climbed as high as second in the national poll, but slipped to No. 5 by the end of January with an 18-4 record.

So while most of the state was busy scouring stores for national championship paraphernalia, many Hastings fans were making noise about their basketball team, one of the most successful small-college squads in the state during the past 20 years.

In fact, the toughest ticket in town is for the Broncos' Nebraska-Iowa Athletic Conference games. In early January, when Hastings played conference-rival Nebraska Wesleyan, most of Kiewit Gymnasium's 1,000 reserved seats were sold the day before.

"We have a home-court advantage, that's for sure," said Hastings Coach Mike Trader, who was cheered by many of the same fans as a Bronco player in the early 1970s. "We have great fans, and they're supportive. I would hate to come in here and have to play against Hastings."

The Broncos have been giving their fans plenty to cheer about this season. In addition to its modest winning streak, Hastings defeated Nebraska Wesleyan 82-78, and knocked off Doane — another NIAC rival — in overtime, 109-105.

The latter avenged an earlier loss to Doane — Hastings' first of the season.

The Broncos entered this season with a strong starting five, but a questionable bench. Center Eric Rasgorshek, who was slowed last December with a foot injury, played his best when it counted most. The 6-foot-8 senior from Crete contributed 20.5 points and 6.5 rebounds per game through the end of January as the focal point of the Hastings offense.

"When Eric is at top speed, we have a very good starting five," Trader said. "When he's on, we're tough to stop."

Forward Chad Spady, from Ogallala, and guard Brian Kobs, a graduate of Omaha Gross High School, take some of the scoring pressure off Rasgorshek. Spady averaged 17 points per game through the end of January, while Kobs kicked in 16.

Forward Peter Ferguson, a senior from Lincoln, is the team's leading rebounder. He also leads the NIAC with an average of 9.5 boards per game. Against Nebraska Wesleyan, he pulled down a career-high 22 rebounds.

Guard Adrian Duncombe, the only non-Nebraskan in the starting lineup, makes sure the front-liners have plenty of scoring opportunities. The senior from Miami, Fla., led the conference in assists through January, averaging 8 per game.

Simply put, Hastings has too many weapons for most Division II schools.

"We're very experienced, which is why we played so well early in the year," Trader said. "We can match up with just about any team out there. We have size, a good rebounder, a playmaker and we play good defense most of the time."

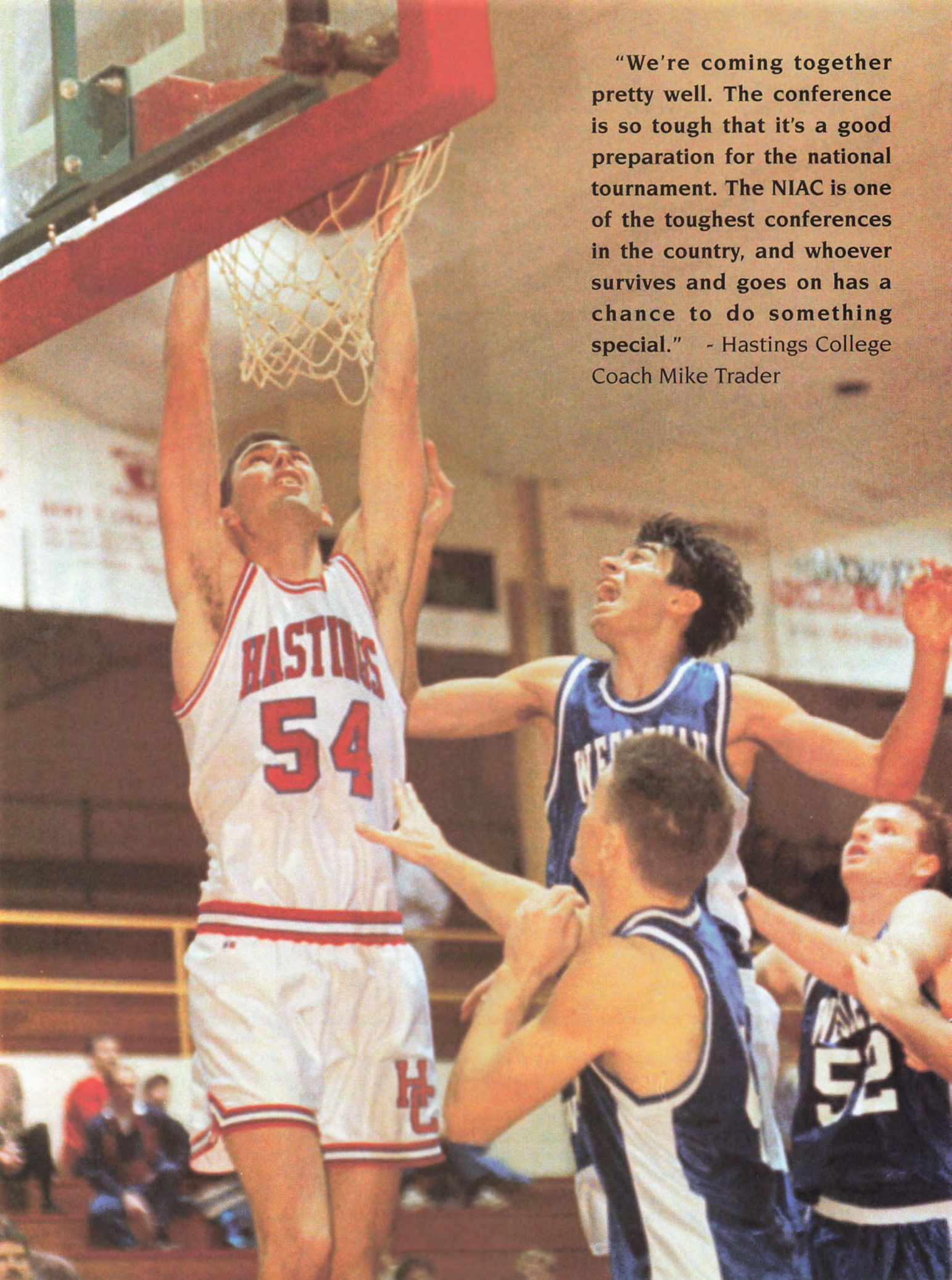
The Broncos' bench — a concern heading into the season — turned into a plus midway through the year. Dave Teixeira of Papillion and Kris Young of Waverly back up Rasgorshek in the middle, while freshman Jared Holmes has seen ample playing time at forward.

Trader also has been pleased with guards Chad Beezley of Kearney and Todd Schmidt of Norfolk, both of whom are newcomers to the program. Beezley is a freshman and Schmidt transferred to Hastings after playing as a walk-on at Kansas State last year.

"Beezley didn't play at all during the first 12 games, but he's turning into a very good player who we can rely on this year," Trader said. "Everybody has played well at times, and our bench is much improved over last year."

Trader doesn't refer to last season often, and it isn't just because of the disappointing 12-17 record.

In late January 1994, Trader was suspended for four games by Hastings Athletic Director Bob Boerigter because he co-signed on loans for three student athletes.



"We're coming together pretty well. The conference is so tough that it's a good preparation for the national tournament. The NIAC is one of the toughest conferences in the country, and whoever survives and goes on has a chance to do something special." - Hastings College Coach Mike Trader

In addition to missing four games, Trader also was limited to recruiting on campus and by telephone. He currently is serving a one-year probation imposed by the school.

Through it all, Trader said, his team has gotten stronger.

"It was a disturbing season, but our kids played hard and worked hard until the last game of the season," he said. "It was something nobody wanted to go through. But if you go through adversity and deal with it successfully, you become a stronger person, and a stronger team.

"That's what happened here."

Trader is used to having to overcome adversity. In 1985, he took over the Hastings College program from Lynn "Doc" Farrell, one of the most successful coaches in the state. Farrell won the NIAC — which was called the Nebraska Intercollegiate Athletic conference until 1992, when Northwestern College of Iowa joined and the name was changed — 11 times, including every year but two from 1973 to 1984.

Twice during that span, the Broncos shared the conference title — in 1975-76 with Doane and in 1983-84 with Nebraska Wesleyan.

Farrell also coached Hastings to the NAIA National Tournament five times from the mid-1960s through the 1970s.

Trader, who had coached at three Nebraska high schools before taking over the Hastings program, found out very early that replacing a legend can be tough.

"I knew the tradition was probably better (at Hastings College) than most schools around here, but Doc made the transition very easy," Trader said. "I'll always remember what Doc said when I first took the job. He told me that there was no way anybody could do what had been done before in this program, because times had changed too much."

While Farrell was winning NIAC titles almost at will during the 1970s, his only real competition came from Doane. In the 1980s, all that changed.

Nebraska Wesleyan won or shared eight titles from 1983 to 1991. Since then, Concordia, Doane and Northwestern College of Iowa have won NIAC championships.

In the first 13 years of the NIAC, the only teams to win the league were Hastings and Doane.

"The conference has definitely changed since I played for Hastings," Trader said. "Back then, if we got past Doane, the conference race was pretty much over. Not, it's a fight for survival every night. This year, five teams have a great chance of winning the conference.

"That was unthinkable back in the 1970s."

Back then, though, the conference race wasn't even the team priority for Hastings. The Broncos' annual showdown in the NAIA District 11 Tournament against then-Kearney State — now the University of Nebraska-Kearney — was anticipated by most small-college basketball fans from December on.

"There was nothing like a Hastings-Kearney game back then," NIAC Information Director Jeff Crane said. "During the season, that game was in the back of everybody's mind in Hastings. If the game started at 7:30, and you didn't have a ticket by five, you were our of luck."

During Trader's playing days at Hastings, the Broncos downed Kearney State twice to reach the NAIA National Tournament in 1973 and 1974.

Twenty-one years later, Trader is trying to reach the national tournament as a coach.

"We're coming together pretty well," he said. "The conference is so tough that it's a good preparation for the national tournament. The NIAC is one of the toughest conferences in the country, and whoever survives and goes on has a chance to do something special."

Small-college basketball remains popular in Hastings, but Trader said he has a hard time understanding why more people in Nebraska don't follow the teams.

To become addicted to it, he said, all one needs is just a small taste of a hot gymnasium.

"I remember one game we were playing, a high school coach from Omaha came to watch," Trader said. "After the game, he came up to me and said he thought small-college basketball was the best-kept secret in Nebraska.

"I think he's right. It doesn't get much better than this." ■

THE ALASKA PIPELINE

Dan Kowal learned to coach hockey by playing basketball.

A construction worker by trade, Kowal used his knowledge of basketball strategy and technique to coach some of Alaska's best youth hockey teams. The Omaha Lancers, three time zones away, tapped into the success Kowal achieved with his Alaska North Star teams.

The Lancers' Alaska pipeline was constructed several years ago when Mike Guentzel, a Lancers coach at the time, scouted the hockey talent the 49th state. He liked what he saw.

Since then, 10 current and former Lancers, all Kowal's former pupils, left Alaska for Nebraska to play hockey. Current Lancer Coach Mike Hastings sees several common traits among Kowal's former pupils.

"They're very coachable kids," Hastings said. "They take direction well. I'd also say their work ethic is good. They go all out."

Hastings' 1995 Lancer squad includes six players who learned the game from Kowal: Brian Swanson, Nathan Rocheleau, Michael Victor, Sean Bowman, Justin Lyle and Kowal's son, Tom.

Kowal also coached former Lancers Brian Hill, Maurice Hall, Ken Hemenway and Eric Runyan.

United States Hockey League teams may protect three areas or teams. Guentzel originally protected the North Stars and Hastings saw no reason for a change when he took over the team. According to Hastings, the quality of the Alaskan players goes beyond the ice.

"You're not only looking at the quality of the players, but the quality of the people," he said. "We've not had a lot of problems with them off the ice."

Although hockey talent in an area often is cyclical, Hastings sees no reason to turn over the Alaska rights to another USHL franchise.

"I talked to Dan and he says he has another group of good kids coming up," he said.

And that's just fine with Kowal, who believes the Omaha franchise is the finest in the league. That distinction begins with Lancers President Ted Baer and extends to the Omaha families that provide Lancer players with room and board.

Kowal's oldest son, Jack, played USHL hockey in Dubuque, Iowa, and he compares the two franchises to make his point. Dubuque, at that time, had just one ice rink, no equipment store and difficulties finding host families for its players.

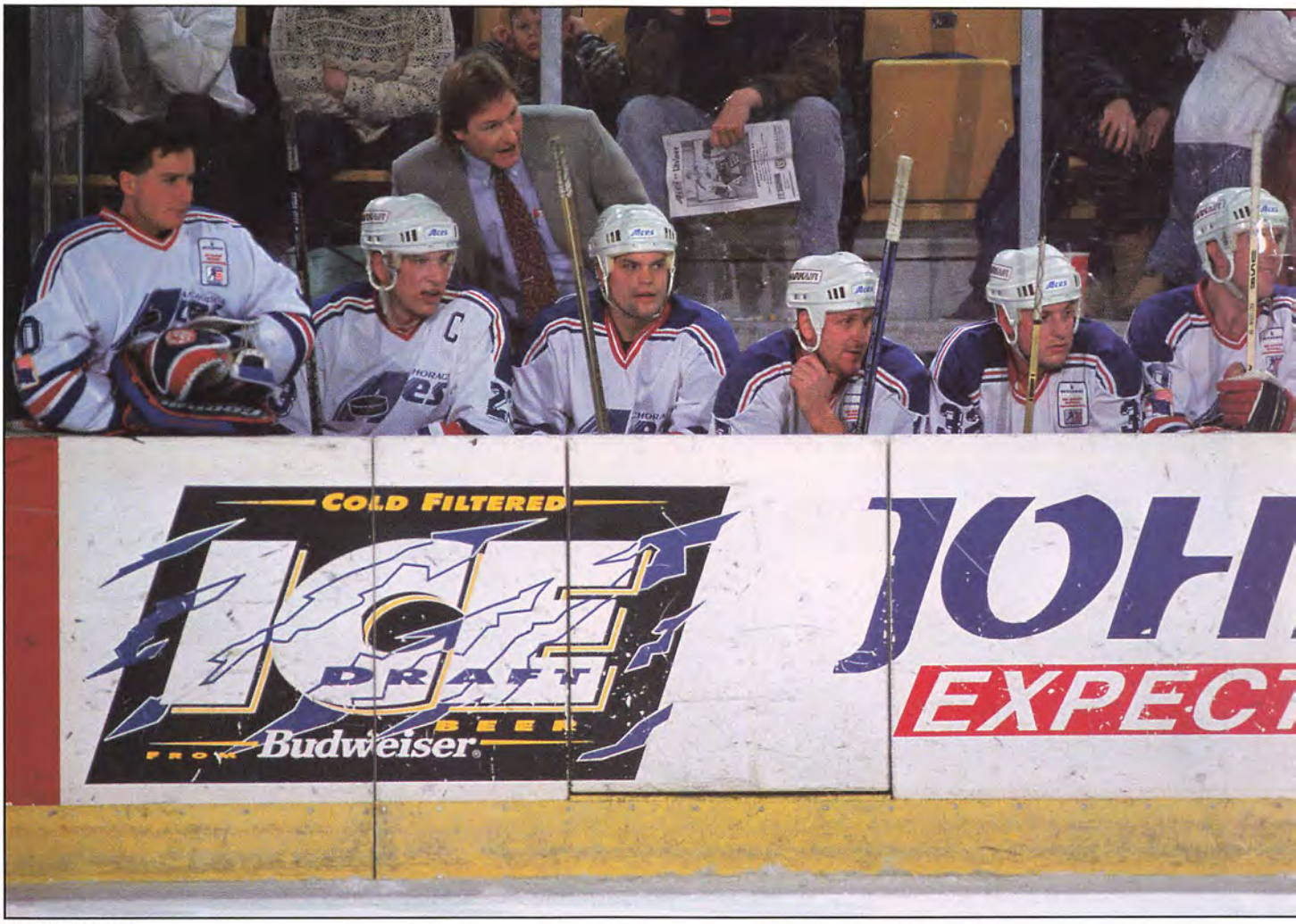
"Jack would break a stick and I'd end up sending him a couple from Alaska," Kowal recalled. "That gets expensive. You'd never know what family you'd end up with. It was 'Take what you can get.' In Omaha, they have a waiting list."

It took only one visit to Omaha to convince Kowal. He remembers reaching his conclusion after attending his first game at Ak-Sar-Ben.

"My God, it's like a night at the opera," he said.

Coaching Alaska youth hockey wasn't in Kowal's plans when he was young. Although he grew up playing the sport – competing on state championship teams his sophomore and junior seasons – Kowal turned to basketball as a high school senior. The decision to switch sports wasn't difficult. Kowal,

by Kevin Warneke



Photos by Ann Raup

who matured late, eventually grew to 6-foot-3. He also noticed that the basketball team played in front of crowds numbering in the thousands, not in the hundreds.

Kowal played basketball at Anchorage East High School for Chuck White, one of the state's best and a real Xs and Os man. Years later, Kowal realized the two sports had quite a few similarities.

"You want to put the puck in the net, you want to put the ball in the net," Kowal said. "Zone presses, pick and roll – they work in hockey, too. Teaching the Xs and Os in hockey gives you a real advantage."

Kowal's wife pushed him into getting involved in youth hockey. Their son was 6 years old and she decided it was time he began playing kid hockey.

"I said, 'No, no, let's not get too excited.' She signed him up anyway," Kowal said.

> Dan Kowal's youth hockey teams are well-known in Alaska, and many of his players have gone on to make their own names in Nebraska

After his first season, in which Jack was one of the worst players on the squad, Kowal asked his son if he liked the sport and whether he wanted to get better. Jack did.

So Kowal built an ice rink in the front yard of their home.

"There's no sense being in the third quarter with the game on the line and sitting on the bench," Kowal said.

Tom Kowal, then 4 years old, didn't like seeing his brother and father playing hockey without them.

"If your brother's doing something, you have to do it," Tom said.

Dempsey Anderson told Kowal he was organizing a team of 6- and 7-year-olds, and wanted Tom to play. He also wanted Kowal to help coach the youngsters.

Kowal quickly adopted the philosophy that he wanted his sons competing on teams with talented players. Youngsters won't improve, he said,

Although Dan Kowal does his best to distance himself from the action on the ice (above), he's never far away from admirers of every age (below).

unless they're competing and practicing against the best.

Kowal later teamed with Steve Gasparini, who married into the family, and the two together have coached youth squads of all ages.

Playing for his father wasn't always easy, Tom Kowal said. Sometimes, when he wanted to go outside and play with friends, his father had other plans.

"He'd say, 'Go and get your gear,'" Tom said.

A bad day at the rink meant a bad day at home when conversation ultimately turned to hockey.

"I'll tell you this," the elder Kowal said, "there wasn't too many bad days at the rink."

Although he helped him learn all aspects of the game, his father influenced Tom's shooting the most. When the family moved, the Kowals lost their front-yard ice rink, but gained a Plexiglas shooting gallery in the backyard of their new home. Father and son spent endless hours outside with the

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elder Kowal passing to the younger, who shot into a net tied to two trees.

Kowal's teammates listed other ways their former coach helped improve their game.

Sean Bowman recalled how Kowal worked individually with each player. If practice needed to be stopped so Kowal could help a player, it was.

Kowal also was a great motivator, Bowman said.

"Dan Kowal was the first coach I really wanted to go out and do well for," he said.

Michael Victor credits Kowal for making him a good passer.

"Trailer passes, lateral movement – he pumped into our heads since we were 8 years old," Victor said. "I pretty much credit my entire game to him."

Victor remembers Kowal being at his best during a peewee tournament in Port Huron, Mich. The squad was losing 3-2 with 20 seconds remaining when Kowal called a time-out. He set up the play and told his players: "Go out and try it, and we'll see what happens. And have some fun out there."

They did. They scored, won in overtime and finished first in the 700-team tournament.

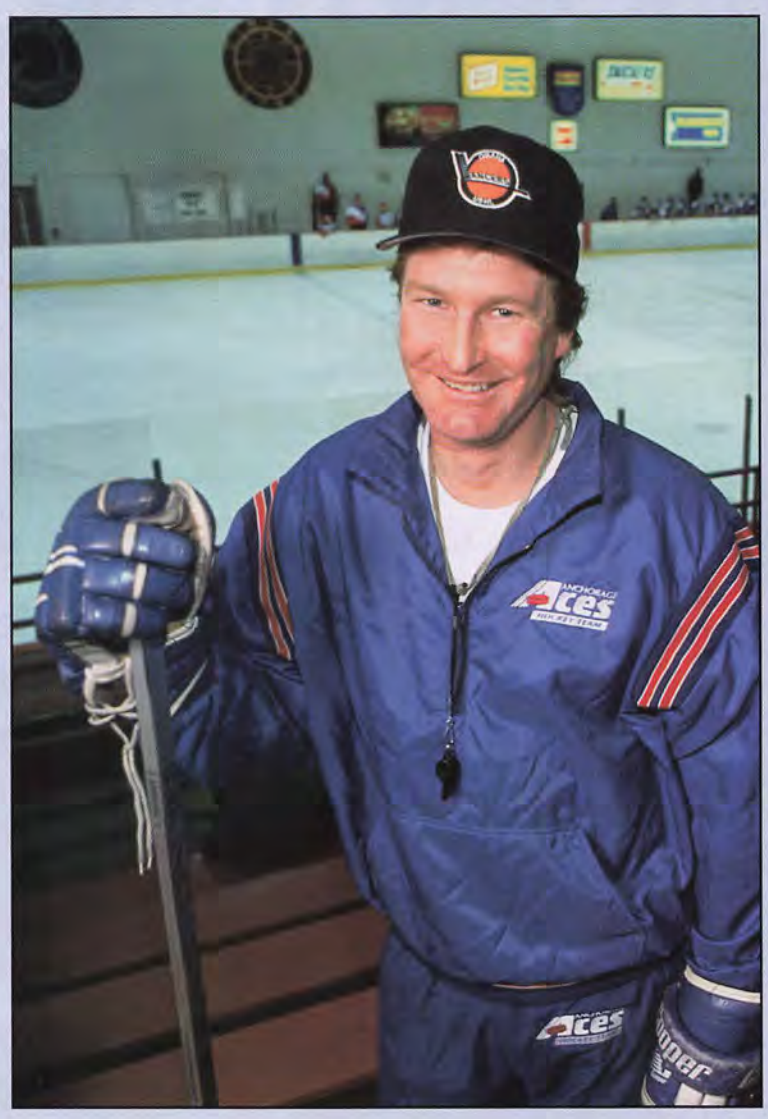
When the younger Kowal thinks back to his youth hockey days, when his father was his coach, he doesn't immediately think of the tournaments they won. Instead, he remembers the time his father showed him there were more important things than hockey.

Tom was playing on a peewee team with boys several years older. An opponent checked Kowal hard enough to break his facemask and momentarily knock him unconscious. At first, Tom was afraid he was seriously hurt and wouldn't be able to play hockey again.

He remembers the words his father used that day to comfort him: "You'll play hockey again. But one thing, I'll always love you whether you do or don't."

"It just made my day," Tom said. ■

KOWAL'S KIDS



Dan Kowal's only complaint about having so many of his former players on the Omaha Lancer roster is that he never gets to see them play.

Although he takes pride in their accomplishments, he doesn't want any of the credit.

"I got them on the right track, Steve (Gasparini) put on the finishing touches," he said.

Kowal offers these descriptions of how the six current Lancers he coached have progressed from their youth hockey days.

Sean Bowman: "He matured early. He had his growth spurt at 12. He's a big boy, sometimes a hothead. A real free spirit. Always intense and fired up."

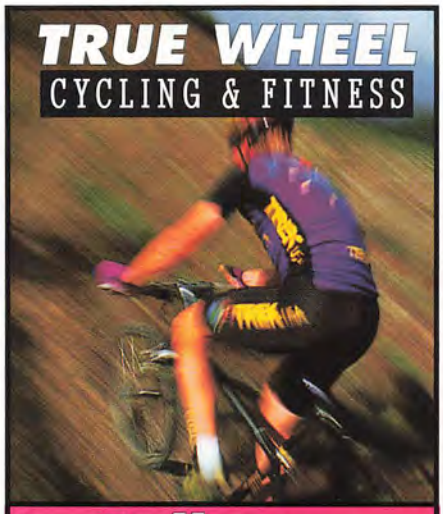
Michael Victor: "Cerebral. Very smart. He had a constant battle with a nonathletic body. He was a fast learner and used it to his advantage. He was nicknamed the 'Professor' in his younger days."

Nathan Rocheleau: "A real good kid. A hard shooter, a scorer. He came to see that the give-and-go allowed him to get open. He one-timed the puck exceptionally well."

Tom Kowal: "He marches a little bit to a different drummer. When he was young, he wrote with both hands. His teachers would flip when they'd see him switch his pencil to the other hand and start writing."

Justin Lyle: "Mario Lemieux-like. He has the sweetest hands. A little slow of foot and appears to be uncoordinated. He's built up a big-time body."

Brian Swanson: "Took the same intellectual approach as Victor in practice. Never had to go up to him and say, 'Get your butt in gear.' Brian was a leader from the start." ■



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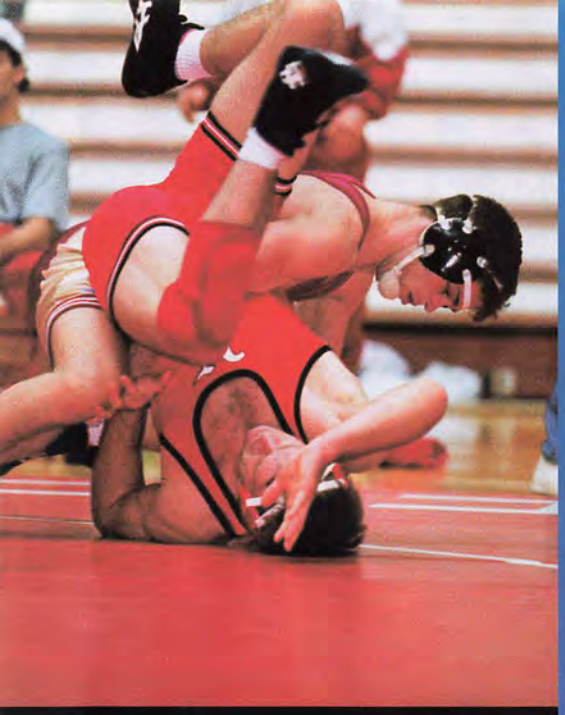


MARCH

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY

NEBRASKA SPORTS Magazine

- Men's Basketball
- Women's Basketball
- Hockey
- Men's Gymnastics
- Women's Gymnastics
- Baseball
- Special Events

5 Iowa St. at NU – 12:30 pm TriCity at Racers – 7:35 pm Indiana St. at CU – 2:05 pm UNO at NU. Doubleheader – 3:00 pm Sioux City at Lancers – 7:05 pm Missouri Valley Tournament St. Louis – TBA Big Eight Tournament Salina, KS – TBA	**6** CU at Texas-San Antonio – 2:00 pm Des Moines at Lancers – 7:05 pm Missouri Valley Tournament St. Louis – TBA Big Eight Tournament Salina, KS – TBA	**7** Racers at Hartford – 6: CU at Texas – 7:00 pm
12 CU at SW Texas St. – 10:00 am Big Eight Tournament Kansas City, MO – TBA NU at Bulldog Invite (Georgia, California, Massachusetts, Penn State, UCLA) Athens, GA – 2:00 pm Lancers at North Iowa – TBA NU at Collegiate Invitational Baseball Tournament, San Antonio, TX – TBA	**13** NU at Collegiate Invitational Baseball Tournament San Antonio, TX – TBA	**14** NU at Collegiate Invitation Baseball Tournament San Antonio, TX – TBA
19 NU at New Mexico – 11:00 am CU at Indiana St. – 1:00 pm NU at New Mexico St. 2:00 pm Racers at Shreveport – 6:05 pm	**20** NU at Washington Las Cruces, NM – 2:00 pm Minnesota at NU – 7:00 pm Minnesota at NU – 7:00 pm	**21** NU at New Mexico St. El Paso, TX – 7:00 pm Yakima at Racers – 7:05
26 CU at Illinois St. – Noon NU at Kansas St., Doubleheader 2:00 pm	**27**	**28** CU at Kansas St. – TBA

H 1995

Y	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Neb.-Kearney at NU – 1:30 pm Wayne St. at CU – 2:00 pm Racers at Oklahoma City 7:35 pm NU at Kansas St. – 7:35 pm	**2**	**3** CU at Baylor – 7:00 pm	**4** Missouri Valley Tournament St. Louis – TBA Big Eight Tournament, Salina, KS – TBA NU at Ohio St. – 7:30 pm NU at Ohio St. – 7:30 pm Lancers at Sioux City – TBA CU at Baylor, Doubleheader – 2:00 pm
		GIRLS STATE BASKETBALL – LINCOLN (VARIOUS SITES) ALL DAY		
05 pm	**8** Racers at Grand Rapids 6:05 pm NU at Oklahoma, Doubleheader 3:00 pm CU at Texas – 7:00 pm	**9** Missouri Valley Tournament Springfield, MO – TBA	**10** CU at SW Texas St. – 2:00 pm Rapid City at Racers – 6:05 pm NU at Cal-Santa Barbara – 7:30 pm Big Eight Tournament Kansas City, MO – TBA Missouri Valley Tournament Springfield, MO – TBA	**11** Pittsburgh at Racers – 7:05 pm Lancers at Rochester – TBA Big Eight Tournament Kansas City, MO – TBA Missouri Valley Tournament Springfield, MO – TBA NU at Collegiate Invitational Baseball Tournament, San Antonio, TX – TBA
		BOYS STATE BASKETBALL – LINCOLN (VARIOUS SITES) ALL DAY		
nal	**15** Kansas St. at CU – 1:00 pm Racers at Rapid City – 8:05 pm	**16** Hartford at Racers – 7:05 pm	**17** CU at Indiana St. – 3:00 pm Iowa at NU – 7:00 pm Iowa St. at NU – 7:00 pm	**18** NU at Miami (Ohio) – 3:00 pm CU at Indiana St. Doubleheader – 1:00 pm
pm	**22** NU at Washington El Paso, TX – 7:00 pm Iowa St. at CU – TBA	**23** Racers at Mexico City 8:35 pm	**24** CU at Illinois St. – 3:00 pm NU at Kansas St. – 7:00 pm	**25** NU at Kansas St. – 3:00 pm CU at Illinois St. – 3:00 pm Shreveport at Racers– 7:05 pm Big Eight Championships 7:00 pm
	29 NU at Missouri, Doubleheader 2:00 pm CU at Oklahoma St. – 3:00 pm	**30**	**31** Northern Iowa at CU – 3:30 pm NU at Mountain Pacific Championships Albuquerque, NM – 7:00 pm Missouri at NU – 7:00 pm	

NO TIME

BY CHUCK GREEN

Tim Neumann will never forget the date. It was Oct. 15, 1985.

It was a sunny Tuesday in Lincoln, about 70 degrees. For Neumann, it was even brighter and warmer.

It was the day he became Nebraska's interim wrestling coach, and the day the Cornhusker wrestling program hit a turning point.

Bob Fehrs, Nebraska's wrestling coach since 1978, had decided to resigned. He dropped the bombshell on Neumann before telling most others.

"I didn't know until he came into the office the day he resigned," Neumann recalled. "He said, 'I have a meeting with (then Athletic Director) Bob Devaney in about half an hour. I just resigned and he's going to hire you as the head coach on an interim basis.'

"I was shocked. I had no idea he was going to do that."

It wasn't until six months later that Neumann officially became Nebraska's permanent coach.

"I had some recruits in the elevator in South Stadium, and Bob Devaney was in there with us," he said. "He kind of held me back while we were getting off the elevator and told me that I got the job."

Before Neumann became coach, Nebraska wasn't thought of as one of the country's elite wrestling programs. Iowa and Oklahoma State were always there, as were Iowa State and Oklahoma. The Huskers weren't. Fehrs, Neumann's predecessor who coached from 1978 to 1985, was the most successful coach the Husker wrestling program ever had, finishing his seven-year career with a record of 97-51-2 — a .653 winning percentage.

Neumann, though, has shattered that mark.

As of Feb. 9, Neumann had compiled a 129-49-4 dual record in his nine years as Nebraska's coach. Under his direction, Nebraska's program has produced 21 All-America selections, two individual national champions and 10 individual Big Eight titles.

"It's been a long process," he said. "You can develop a good team in five years, I think, if you do a good job recruiting and selecting the right kids. You can get a team from 50th to 15th in five years pretty easily. But to develop a program, where all those things are in place, it's taken us all nine years to get where we are.

"We've never sat down at our desks and said, 'We're there.' And I doubt if we ever will."

Through the first 17 duals of the season, Nebraska owns an 14-3 dual record and is ranked No. 3 in the country by Amateur Wrestling News.

"We still have a lot of work to do this season, but we'll get there," Neumann said.

"We" includes assistant coaches Mark Cody and Brad Penrith, and volunteer assistant Corey Olson, one of Neumann's former wrestlers.

"There is no way we would be as successful as we have been without the assistant coaches," Neumann said.

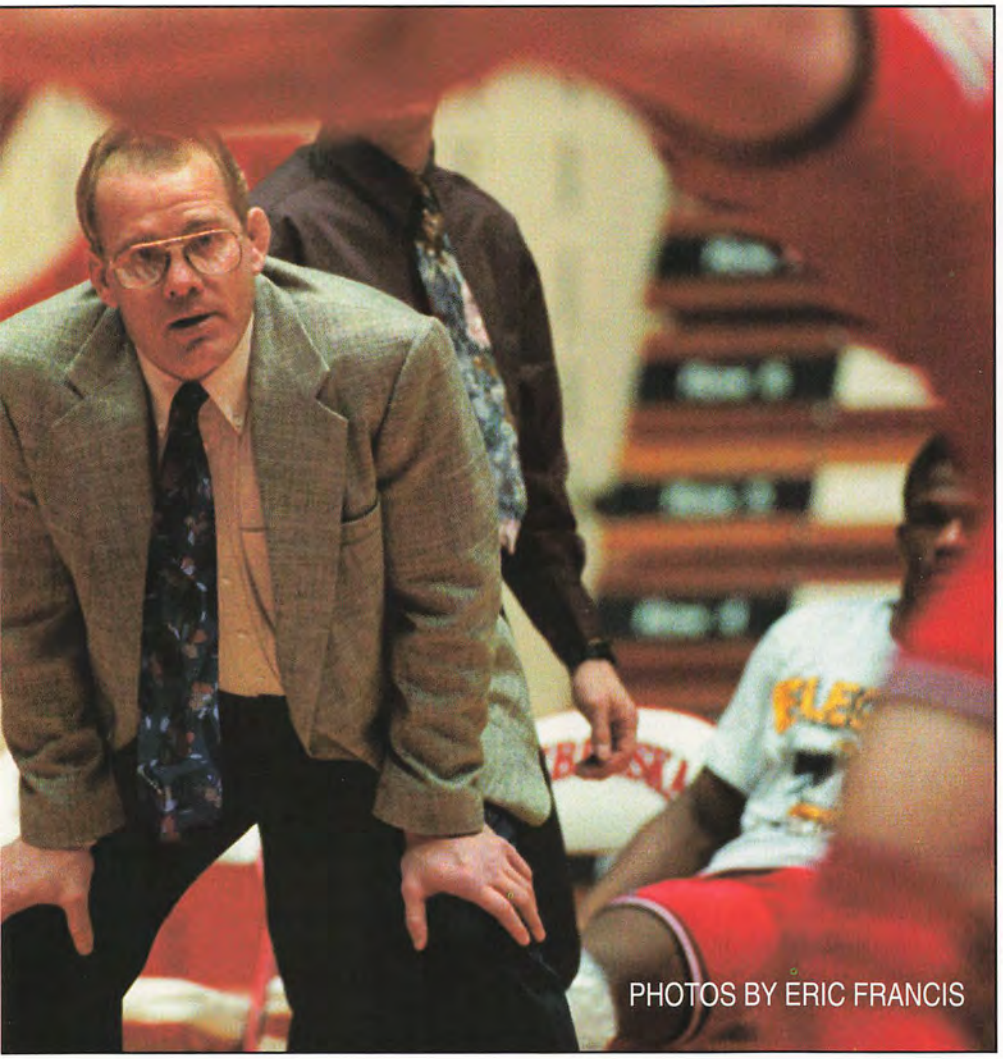
Neumann, a native of Peshtigo, Wis., wrestled for Fehrs and graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1980 with a bachelor's degree in physical education. After spending two seasons as the wrestling coach at Plainville (Kan.) High School, Fehrs contacted Neumann and asked if he'd like to return to Nebraska to help coach the Huskers.

Neumann gladly accepted, and he's made sure no one could second-guess Fehrs' decision ever since.

In his first season as an assistant, Neumann helped Fehrs steer the team to a sixth-place finish at the NCAA Championships. The next season, the Huskers finished fourth.

Although Nebraska's program had smatterings of success before Neumann

TO BE CONTINUED



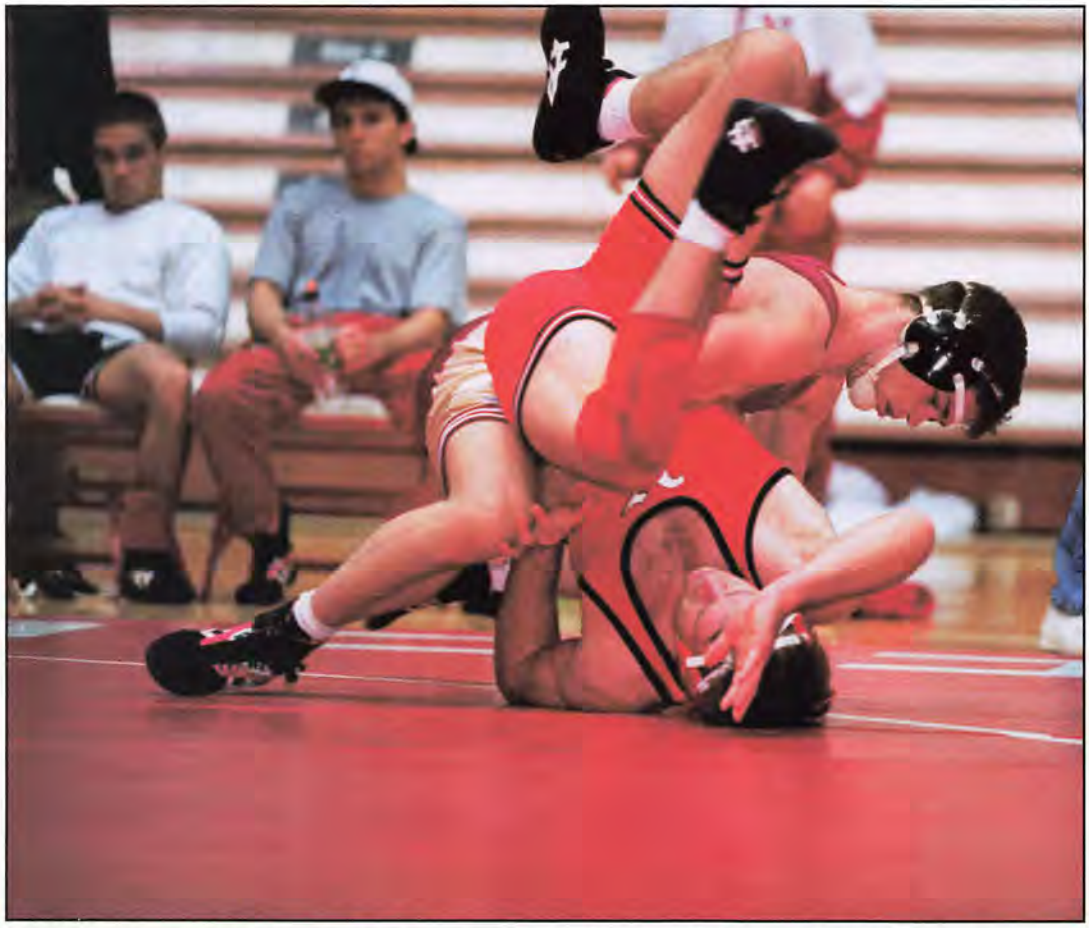
PHOTOS BY ERIC FRANCIS

became coach, the Huskers never were able to maintain the consistency of the past nine years.

In his first full year of coaching — the 1986-87 season — Neumann guided the Huskers to a 14th-place finish at the NCAA Championships, and coached Gil Sanchez to a second-place finish at the tournament in the 134-pound weight class. Sanchez was only the sixth Husker wrestler to reach the NCAA finals.

After the injury-riddled Huskers finished 39th at the 1987-88 NCAA Championships, Neumann guided Nebraska to a No. 9 final ranking in the Amateur Wrestling News poll, and finished 17th at the 1989 national meet.

In 1989-90, Nebraska finished with a 21-2-1 dual record — single-season bests for the Huskers and Neumann — and finished fifth at the national meet, earning Neumann his second consecutive Big Eight Coach of the Year award. He also was named Amateur Wrestling News' National Coach of the Year.



Under Neumann's direction, the Nebraska wrestling program has joined the nation's elite, and plans to stay.

In 1991, the Huskers finished 10th at the NCAA meet. The following season, they finished 11th. But it was 1993 that Nebraska, in the minds of many wrestling insiders, permanently joined the nation's wrestling elite.

That season, the Huskers defeated Iowa, Iowa State, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State — the "Big Four" of collegiate wrestling at the time — in regular-season duals. No other Nebraska wrestling team had beaten the four in the same season. Nebraska went on to win its first Big Eight team title in more than 40 years, and finished third at the NCAA Championships.

That 1993 team, for now, remains as Neumann's favorite.

"We had eight seniors that year, and it was just a great team," he said.

Neumann attributed at least part of that success to the type of athlete he recruits.

"If you've got the right talent, the winning and the losing will pretty much take care of itself," he said. "For years, I had teams that were inferior to Oklahoma State, Oklahoma, Iowa State, Iowa. We'd always have to figure out a way to beat them with inferior talent.

"I don't recruit problem children like I used to. I used to think I could save the world. No matter how bad a kid was in high school, as far as his personal habits were concerned, I thought we could fix him. I don't try to do that anymore."

Now, Neumann is more picky with his recruits, and the results have shown.

Under his guidance, six Husker wrestlers have earned Academic All-America honors in the past four years, and Nebraska's program has one of the top graduation rates in the country. This season, in the first semester, the team grade-point average was above 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.

"Now I can actually concentrate on coaching and developing these people the way we want them to instead of trying to get them to earn a C in a class so they'll stay eligible," Neumann said.

Neumann coached many of his former wrestlers well enough to help them earn jobs as coaches. Sanchez is in his second year as coach at Clemson. Jason Kelber, the 1991 NCAA champion at 126, is an assistant coach at the University of Indiana. Several others are coaching high school teams throughout the country.

Neumann credits the Nebraska athletic department with simplifying his job.

"This is probably one of the four or five best schools to be a wrestling coach at," he said. "(Athletic Director) Bill Byrne makes me feel like wrestling's very important. Our associate athletic director, Al Papik, loves wrestling. He's at all of our meets. Our marketing department has done a wonderful job the last few years . . . it's just made my job so much easier.

"I feel very lucky to be here. I've got it perfect. I'm coaching at my alma mater, we've got a good team and the program's solid. We even have a list of more people than we need to volunteer to help us with setting up for meets and doing other volunteer work."

Neumann has a few plans to secure the program's future, too.

Next July, and again in the summer of 1996, Nebraska will host the USA Cadet National Tournament, which will include 2,000 of the country's top 14- to 16-year-old wrestlers. The tournament will last for a week at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, and the athletes will stay in the UNL residence halls. The tournament, Neumann said, should benefit Nebraska's program.

"For the next five years, in our recruiting, we'll be calling those kids and they'll say, 'Oh, yeah, I know about your school. I was there,'" he said.

But not everything has been easy since Neumann took over at Nebraska.

Like any coach, he's had his share of losses throughout the years, including some heartbreakers.

"I'm real easy to motivate, or to make feel bad," he said. "When our team loses, I probably take it more personally than I should."

And, like any other coach, he has to find ways of coping with the setbacks.

Against Oklahoma State at the National Duals on Jan. 21, Neumann was upset by his team's performance.

"That's the first time in a long time that I actually got mad at the way we wrestled," he said. "We were prepared right. I knew we did everything right. But it just didn't work out as planned on the mat."

That night, after the Huskers lost to the second-ranked Cowboys, Neumann lost sleep.

"I was really beating myself up, trying to figure out what in the heck I did wrong," he said. "The next day, they wrestled exactly like I thought they were going to wrestle the night before — aggressive and sharp. They never got tired."

But there have been bigger problems than a poor showing at a regular-season dual.

"We got 29th in the nation last year," Neumann said. "And every single day since then, the first thought I had when I woke up was, 'We got 29th in the nation. That's an embarrassment. Get out of bed and do something about it.'"

Neumann copes with setbacks by concentrating on recruiting athletes who will help avoid similar setbacks in the future. Last year, Nebraska's recruiting class was ranked third in the country by Amateur Wrestling News. The Huskers signed 11 high school All-America selections — the most any school has ever signed in one season. It is the fifth consecutive top-10 recruiting class Neumann has assembled.

"The last time we had a recruiting class higher than that was the year after we got 39th in the nation (1987-88)," he said. "It's the extra motivation we've needed to recruit harder.

"As long as I can continue to be motivated by losses and not satisfied by wins, I think we'll be OK."

Neumann likes his team's chances at the NCAA Championships this season.

"At the start of the year, I honestly thought we'd finish in the top five," he said. "Everybody thought I was nuts because we got 29th last year and we lost three of our best four people."

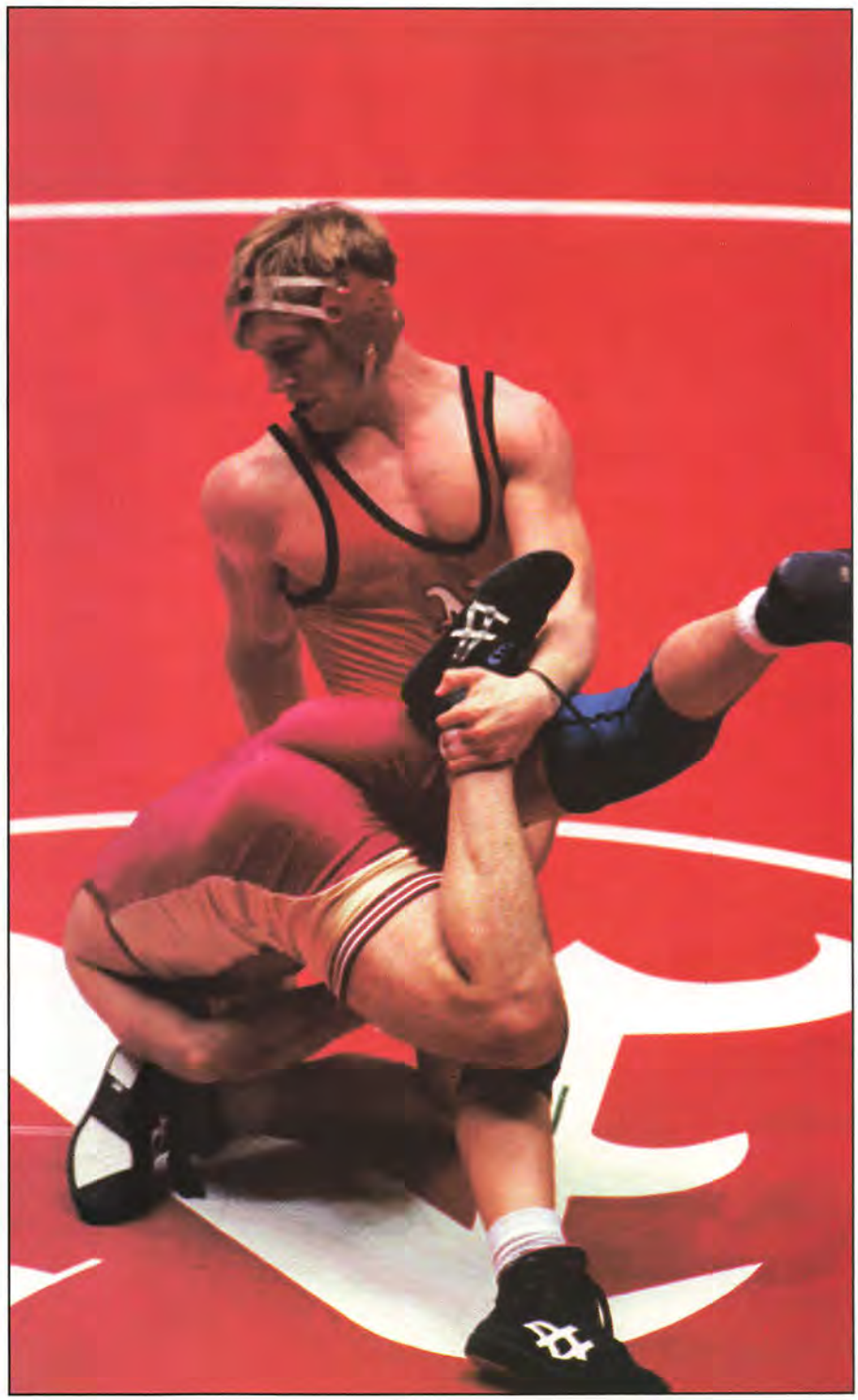
Amateur Wrestling News, which puts out the official collegiate rankings, ranked Nebraska No. 5 in its preseason poll.

"I think they did that," Neumann admitted, "because we were Nebraska, so they thought they needed to put us in there somewhere."

Which speaks volumes about how far Nebraska's program has come in the last nine years.

"I remember during my first year, I was on a recruiting trip and I bought a USA Today in an airport somewhere," Neumann said. "I saw that we were 19th in the poll, and I was so excited. I was showing everybody on the airplane.

"Now if we were rated 19th, I'd be so depressed, I wouldn't even be able to talk about it." ■



Familiar Words

by Kenneth J. Kreiker

Photos by Eric Francis

An autumn Saturday afternoon in Nebraska consists of three constants: brisk prairie winds, a myriad of landscape colors and the refrain that every Cornhusker football fan loves to hear: "Touchdown! Touchdown! Touchdown!"

For the past 20 years in KFAB Radio's broadcast booth at Memorial Stadium, Kent Pavelka's voice has made the state of Husker athletics an auditory journey to the mind's eye. His play-by-play call has infiltrated homes, businesses and automobiles throughout the state as spokesman for Husker fortune and for the faithful following's ears to hear.

Since 1974, when he began broadcasting Husker athletics as the color man for the legendary Lyle Bremser in football and also as the voice of Nebraska basketball, Pavelka has brought the game to the people.

And the people into the game.

"It is a very satisfying profession because you're creating something out of nothing and a lot of people are depending on you to deliver that can't be there," Pavelka said. "It's satisfying because you know you're providing that service to people. I think (the broadcasting profession) is like anything else once you get into it — you find out that there's a flip-side to everything. It can be a grind. But on balance, it's pretty satisfying, very challenging. Challenging in the sense that my mission, as I've defined it, is to create for the listener the environment of the game so that they can participate as if they were there.

"I think it's important to create the color and the emotion as well."

Rich Roberts, sportscaster for KMTV in Omaha and KFAB color man for Husker basketball home games, testifies to Pavelka's emotional state during broadcasts. He remembered one particular episode from last season during a two-point Husker loss to Texas.

"The clock's winding down and Kent has his hand gripping my shoulder," Roberts said. "Pike (former Husker forward Eric Piatkowski) lets it go from three-point range, and Kent raises himself out of the chair in anticipation of him making. The ball bounces off the rim, and it was like somebody deflated him with a pin. I could feel his hand come to a relaxed state on my shoulder.

"When Kent's really into the action, he'll start moving his hands. He'll try to accentuate his point. I think he's successful because he makes you feel like you're there, and that this guy wants our team to win. This guy is pulling for the Huskers."

It's only natural that Pavelka and Husker athletics have formed an identifiable bond to those across the state. Growing up in northeast Lincoln, he began attending Nebraska football and basketball games in grade school, and later graduated with a broadcast major from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He cites former Lincoln broadcasters Dick Perry and Bob Zenner as early influences. His interest in athlet-

ics, combined with his fascination with broadcasting, led Pavelka to an early decision.

"When I was growing up, I had a very early interest in broadcast and in sports broadcasting," he said. "I pretty much knew I wanted to do this as a pretty young guy. Professionally, I'm doing exactly what I wanted to do when I was growing up."

The behind-the-scenes life of a broadcaster goes well beyond showing up in the booth on game day. In addition to his play-by-play duties for Nebraska basketball, Pavelka serves as coordinator for the Husker Football Network, which includes 47 affiliates in the southwestern United States and in California.

Although the football season has just barely been

laid to rest for another year, Pavelka already is working on next year's football season. In July, he'll begin contacting coaches and dedicate himself to knowing the ins and outs of Nebraska football by opening-day's kickoff.

"He's simply the most thorough sportscaster I've ever been around," said Gary Sadlemyer, Pavelka's football color man. "In all areas of his life, he's very, very detail-oriented. He's always ready and he's always prepared. He just does a tremendous amount of work that nobody sees."

Pavelka had a different perspective.

"It's really kind of like taking a class," he said. "If you're going to ace it, you'd better be studying all the time, because the test is Saturday. And once it's over, you've got Sunday to regroup. Sometimes you travel back on Sunday, but even then you're starting in on the next game, because you're reading every newspaper you can find.

"And then it starts all over again on Monday."

Despite 11 years as the primary voice of Husker football, Pavelka has been the target of fan criticism for much of his career. Sadlemyer said, however, that much of the stinging commentary is unjust, for two reasons: Pavelka replaced Bremser, and KFAB won the right in a bidding war to broadcast Husker games.

The events occurred in the same year.

"Kent was fighting two battles here," Sadlemyer said. "There are a lot of people who eat dill pickles and have a sour attitude on life. They want him to be perfect. Athletes and broadcasters are exactly the same to fans. They pay their money and they think they can say anything they want to."

Roberts agreed.

"Out business is subjective," he said. "What Person A likes, Person B doesn't. You just can't please everybody."

Pavelka may not be able to please everyone, but he and Sadlemyer have managed to persuade many among the Husker faithful to keep the radio volume turned up and their television sets turned down during televised Nebraska games.

"I think I've worked at it more than anything else," Pavelka said. "I think it takes a tremendous amount of intensity and dedication toward that end to provide those kinds of word pictures. The highest compliment I've ever had from people who have written to me include some sightless people who have said they could see what's happening.

"That's what I try to do, and if it can happen, then I feel pretty good about it."

Whatever opinions reside among the listeners in Radioland, Pavelka remains the voice of the Huskers. And the crowning moment of his 20-plus years in broadcasting came Jan. 1, with Nebraska's 24-17 national championship win over Miami in the Orange Bowl.

Although he doesn't have a personal top-five list of Husker moments, Pavelka quickly named the recent national championship game as his favorite.

"That's something I've always dreamed about since I've been doing this," he said. "That sometime during my career that would happen so that day after my career ended, I could look back on it and say, 'Boy, was I lucky. Boy, was I blessed. Not only was I able to have this great job all these years, but I was there calling the last play for the national championship.'"

While calling the title game was a personal achievement for Pavelka, to listeners he will likely be remembered most for his dramatic and emphatic call of "Touchdown! Touchdown! Touchdown!" following Husker scores.

Ironically, he can't remember how the signature call came to be.

"It certainly wasn't contrived," he said. "I think you could insert three exclamation points in place of touchdown, touchdown, touchdown. I mean, it was a way to be emphatic about a touchdown that was scored. So it just kind of comes up from inside. If I think it's appropriate, it happens.

If there's one thing Pavelka never does, it's create a script.

"I don't plan any cute things to say. I did think the week before the Orange Bowl game, 'What the hell am I going to say in those last few seconds?' I was kind of disappointed with myself that I would even think that.

"I don't even know what I said, to tell you the truth." ■

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NESM-1

TOO TALL TO HIDE

Photos by Eric Francis

by Sean Weide

One of Creighton University's most recognizable athletes is trying hard – maybe too hard – this brisk winter day to remain incognito as she makes her way across campus.

She has all the trappings of a star under wraps. The dark glasses, the faded blue jeans and a multicolored sports team jacket – complete with collar turned up to ward off the chill and any onlookers. But there's no disguise secret enough to hide the fact that Jenny Olson, all 6-feet-4-inches of her, stacks up as an important factor in the Lady Jays' basketball success this season.

Creighton's Jenny Olson is no longer under wraps

If Olson is trying to keep a low profile, you can't blame her. Coming from a small southwest Iowa town, the 21-year-old, bubble-gum chewing blonde is not accustomed to all the attention.

The latest in a long line of standout post players at Creighton, Olson is closing in on several Lady Jays' career records while helping the team make a run at a second consecutive appearance in the NCAA tournament.

Olson, a senior, came into her final season needing only 39 blocked shots to surpass Jeannine Kardell, Creighton's all-time leader with 133. At midseason, she was 12 shy of the record.

Last year, Olson was the seventh-most accurate shooter in the country, sinking 62.6 percent of her field-goal attempts. Her current .570 career field-goal shooting mark places her second behind Kris Kugel – whom she played behind as a reserve during the past three seasons – on the school's all-time chart.

By season's end, Olson should crack the Lady Jays' top 10 for career scoring and rebounding, despite starting only four games her first three seasons.

Lady Jays Coach Connie Yori said Olson has been a catalyst this season for an offense that averages almost 80 points a game.

"We're relying on her to score for us," said Yori, now in her third season as coach. "She can score from anywhere inside to 15 feet out. She has a great shooting touch for a 6-4 player."

It wasn't always that way.

Olson spent long hours honing her game in the driveway against players her own size. She had to look no further than across the dinner table for suitable opponents. Her older brother Jim is 6-4; her father, Jim Sr., stands 6-6.

"We'd play against each other all the time, and we never called fouls," Olson said. "When I'd play against my dad, he'd complain that I never played as well on the court as I did in the driveway. He'd say something like, 'Why can't you do those kinds of moves in games?'"

She suited up for every varsity game during her years at Logan-Magnolia High School, an Iowa Class 1-A school, which at that time competed in 6-on-6 basketball.

On a cold February night during her senior year, Olson made a name for herself with a performance that remains impressive to this day by anyone's basketball standards.

Playing in the first round of a sectional tournament against Avoca-Shelby-Tennant, she poured in a school-record 78 points, sinking 34 of 36 shots along with 10 free throws.

It's an accomplishment that is hard to forget for those who witnessed it.

"I remember they played us man to man and we just kept throwing the ball inside to her," recalled John Schulte, Olson's high school coach. "To score 78, that's quite a night."

Several months earlier — although he didn't know it at the time — former Lady Jays Coach Bruce Rasmussen won the recruiting war for Olson before it even started by putting her in the limelight one hot, sticky day in June.

On the opening morning of his summer basketball camp before Olson's sophomore year of high school, Rasmussen summoned the lanky 6-2 center down from the bleachers and encouraged her to dunk a tennis ball in front of her fellow campers. Though she was somewhat startled at first by his request, Olson nonetheless confidently stepped up to the hoop and threw down a one-handed slam, sending the entire camp into pandemonium.

Right then, Rasmussen knew Olson would make a fine center.

When Rasmussen departed after Olson's freshman year and Yori came on board, Olson nearly headed for the door. The coaching change brought with it a shift in coaching methods. With the vocal Rasmussen gone, Olson thought Yori's soothing demeanor and teach-rather-than-

scream coaching technique wasn't the kind of motivation she needed.

In hindsight, though, Olson said Creighton has been a good fit. Her parents regularly make the 45-minute drive from their home near Logan to watch the Lady Jays play. And under Yori, Creighton never has been better. The Lady Jays have reached the 20-win plateau their last four seasons, earning berths in two of the last three NCAA tournaments.

More importantly, Olson is scheduled to earn her degree in elementary education next December.

"I really enjoy Creighton and the people here," she said. "I'm sure I'll miss it."

Olson's only goal coming into this season was to play each game harder than the others before it.

"It hits you when you're a senior and it's your last chance," she said. "I just want to give it my best effort every time."

Like any good center, Olson leans, shoves, bumps and jostles when she's down on the blocks. She's not afraid to get physical. But that, too, hasn't always been the case.

Said one insider close to the women's basketball program: "When she first came to Creighton, word got around campus that she couldn't even guard a pylon."

Olson admitted she had a long way to go before earning regular playing time.

"For a while, it seemed I couldn't even catch the ball," she said. "A lot of people questioned whether I was going to make it."

But with intense off-season work under the guidance of assistant coaches Tony DiCecco and Jim Flanery, Olson's conditioning level and strength have improved. Still, she hasn't been able to shake the nickname "Scrawn Girl" Flanery gave her.

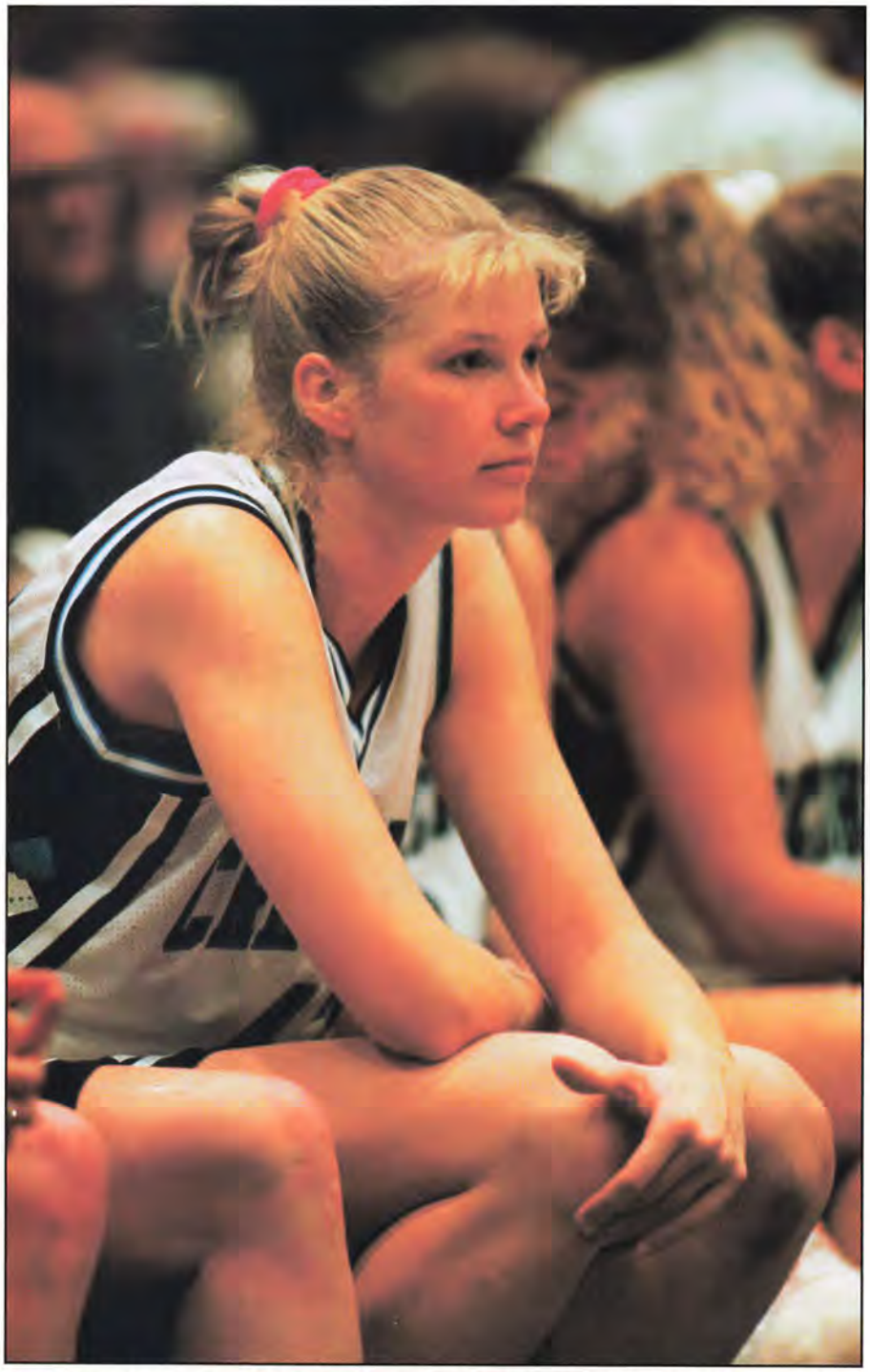
"Compared to some of the people I play against, I am kind of a weenie," Olson said. "If I'm playing against someone stronger than me, they'll push me out of the post. So I just try to set up at the high post and shoot a little further out instead of powering it in. I can't push people around a lot."

Instead, she overcomes her opponents with finesse. Her patented shot seems simple enough – a catch in the lane, a hop-step-pivot and the release of a high-arching shot that often swishes cleanly through the net. It's a shot that is virtually unstoppable against a smaller opponent.

"The only time I can remember having my shot blocked is when someone came from behind me and blocked it when I had the ball behind my head," Olson said. "Now I make sure and keep the ball higher up before I turn so that doesn't happen."

Although the professional opportunities for female basketball centers are limited, Olson has pondered moving overseas to continue her basketball career. It's an option her parents would rather not see her pursue.

"They just worry about me," Olson said, laughing. "I feel it would be a good opportunity to see places I would otherwise never get to go to." ■



Creighton's Jenny Olson isn't sure where her Lady Jays career will take her, but so far, she's enjoyed the ride.

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Movin' On Up

by Michael Watkins
Photos by Scott Norris

Andre Woolridge has his goals in his grasp as the starting point guard for the Iowa Hawkeyes after a critical decision to leave the Cornhuskers in 1993.

Whether he's on the basketball court or in the classroom, Iowa Hawkeye point guard Andre Woolridge is the consummate professional — and perfectionist.

"I hate to make mistakes," said the 1992 Omaha Benson High School graduate. "When I'm on the court or in class, or whatever it may be that I'm doing or I'm involved in, I am in control. So when mistakes happen, like a bad pass or a stupid foul or missing a class, I feel like I've lost control.

"I don't like that."

This season, Woolridge is controlling the Hawkeyes' offense. Through Iowa's first 20 games of the season, he averaged 13.1 points and 2.7 rebounds per game. He is third on the team in scoring.

With the exception of four one-point losses in the Big Ten, his first season as a starting point guard — the player who literally calls the shots on the basketball court — after sitting out a year as a transfer from Nebraska has lived up to his expectations.

"It's been great," Woolridge said. "Iowa is a great basketball school. I like the system. Coach (Tom) Davis is really a players' coach, and I feel really comfortable in the program and with the players."

Woolridge had thought about signing with Iowa out of high school. He was one of the country's most sought-after recruits, and the Hawkeyes were one of the teams at the front of the line. Eventually, he chose Nebraska over Iowa — a choice he soon would decide was the wrong one.

He transferred to Iowa after his freshman season at Nebraska, and had to sit out last year because of NCAA rules.

"Sitting out last season was really tough on me," he said. "Even though I was a part of the team and practiced with the older guys on the team, it was difficult for me to feel a part of the team. But this season is completely different. I really feel like I belong."

Davis, who recruited Woolridge when he was a senior at Benson, said he feels equally comfortable having this gifted athlete running his offense. In fact, Davis said he thinks Woolridge is one of the most talented players he's ever coached — quite a statement for a man who's coached NBA players such as B.J. Armstrong and Michael Adams.

However, Davis said, not everyone shares that opinion.

"He's been doing real well," he said of Woolridge. "But I think there are a lot of people in the Big Ten Conference who hadn't ever seen him play. They were surprised at the level of his talent, and what he's capable of on the basketball court.

"Andre is still very young and needs to learn the college game, the Big Ten game in particular. But I believe his talent is immeasurable when he wants to accomplish something . . . He has a chance to be one of the best guards to ever play at Iowa. Now it's just up to Andre."

WOOLRIDGE
5
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11

davis and Nebraska Coach Danny Nee weren't the only ones who showed interest in luring Woolridge to their respective campuses. At Benson, Woolridge earned spots on just about every high school All-America team imaginable. He led Benson to the 1992 Class A state championship and set the Class A career scoring record with 1,911 points.

As a senior, he averaged 28.6 points, seven rebounds and five assists per game.

But after much deliberation and soul-searching, as well as advice from family and friends, Woolridge shocked the competition by accepting Nee's offer to become a Husker.

"It was a tough decision," he recalled. "But at the time, I wanted to stay as close to my family and friends as possible, and Lincoln was a lot closer than Iowa City."

Woolridge also turned down scholarship offers from perennial basketball powers such as Kentucky, Southern California and Syracuse. He chose to play for the Huskers, where he would join two of his friends: Omaha South's Terrance Badgett, who was redshirted that year, and Bellevue West's Erick Strickland, who also planned to sign with the Huskers.

But halfway through his freshman season at Nebraska, Woolridge's attitude about Nebraska quickly soured, and he decided to transfer to Iowa.

When the media asked why, he simply told them he was unhappy with his playing time. But for someone who played in 30 of the Huskers' 31 games that year — including three starts — and earned All-Big Eight Freshman Team honors, there had to be more to the story.

There was.

"I was unhappy with my playing time," Woolridge admitted. "But once I got to Nebraska, I quickly realized that Coach Nee placed a different kind of emphasis on the importance of point guard than what I felt the position should have been. Coach Nee believed the point more or less played the role of safeguard; don't take any chances and don't make any mistakes.

"That wasn't the style I wanted to play, nor was it the style I was used to. I wanted to make it work, but it just never did. All the speculation that Coach Nee and I hold bad feelings for one another is not true. I have a lot of respect for him as a coach and as a person. We just had different ideas about what I should be doing on the basketball court."

Woolridge said he left Nebraska on good terms, and that neither he nor Nee were "up in arms" about the decision.

"I think in the beginning, when he got wind of the rumors that I was thinking of or planning on leaving, he felt a little bit betrayed," Woolridge said. "I had said something to just about everyone

but him. But once I made my decision and talked with him about it, he supported me as much as he could.

"I think he just wants the best for me."

Woolridge stuck it out at Nebraska for the remainder of his freshman season, ultimately making the decision to leave in the spring.

At the top of his list was Iowa.

"It was a couple of days after the 1993 NCAA Tournament when I made my decision," Woolridge said. "It was something that I had been thinking about for months, even before Christmas. A couple of weeks after that, I contacted Coach Davis and one of his assistants and expressed an interest in playing for them. I grew up watching Iowa basketball, so it was a very natural decision for me. I was excited about playing for the Hawkeyes."

Davis also was excited about the prospect.

"The first time I ever saw Andre play was in Las Vegas at an all-star game, and I was tremendously impressed with his point guard capabilities," Davis said. "We liked him a lot coming out of high school and were quite disappointed when he decided to go to Nebraska."

When the Iowa coaches learned that Woolridge was interested in transferring to Iowa, they moved quickly to prevent him from getting away a second time.

"We jumped at the opportunity right away," Davis said. "He's the total package, as far as college point guards go. He's got good strength, is emotionally and mentally sound, has tremendous quickness, is a solid ball-handler in traffic and makes intelligent shot decisions. He rarely misses."

Last season, Iowa's Mon'ter Glasper played most of the time at point guard, shooting less than 30 percent from the field. In 27 games, he had only 140 assists. So far this season, Woolridge has 110 — good enough for third in the Big Ten.

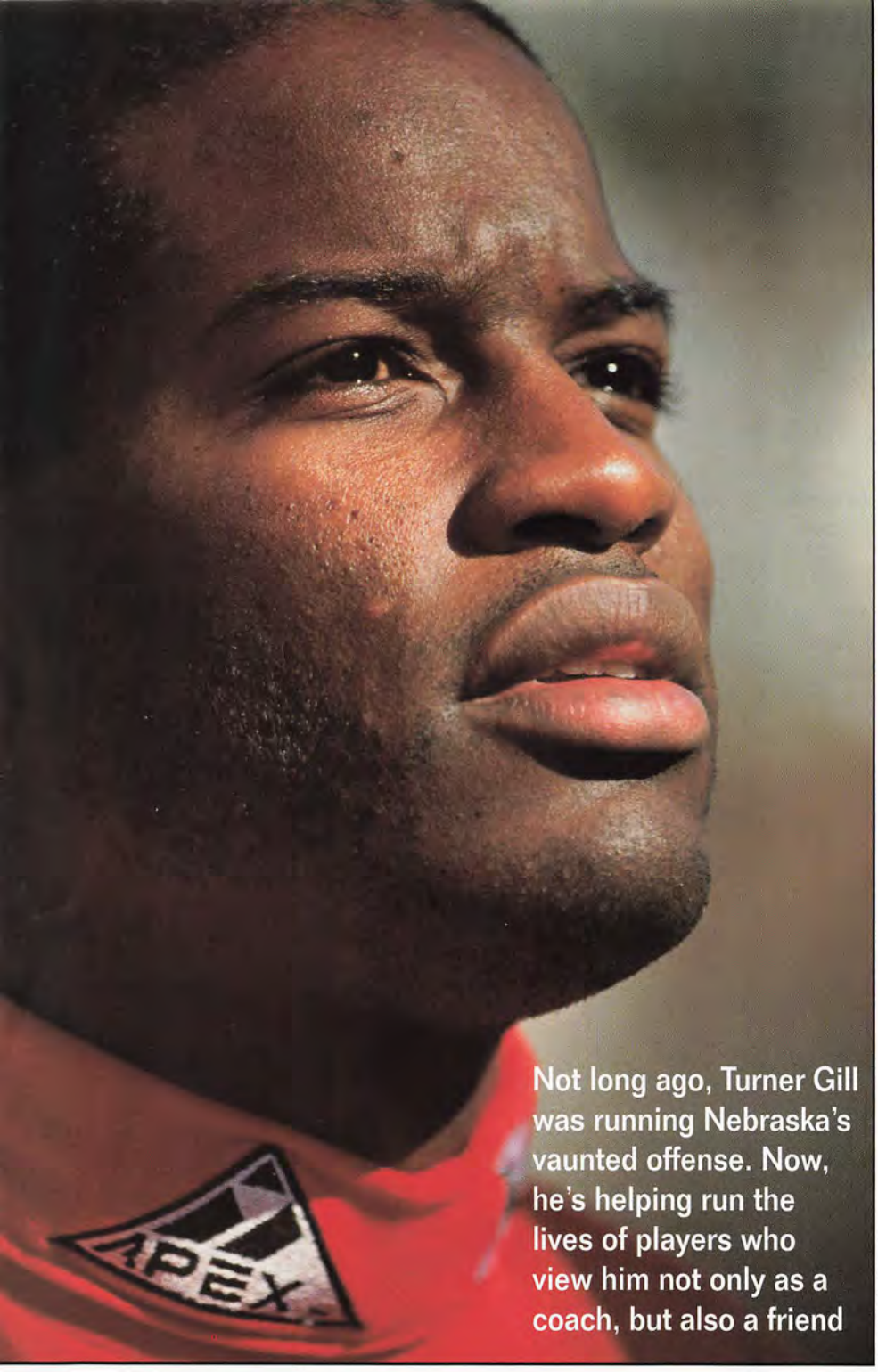
"He is the missing piece this year," Davis said. "He obviously fits into the role we wanted him to, and he's doing exactly what we wanted him to do. He's a tremendous asset to our team and to Iowa in general."

Woolridge is also pleased with his decision to transfer.

"It's definitely one of the best decisions that I've made so far in my life," he said. "I knew guards under Davis often go to the pros, and that's one of my ultimate goals. If it doesn't happen, I've still got my education, and I would like to get into sports broadcasting."

For now, Woolridge's plans aren't focused much past March.

"Right now, my goal is to held lead this team, a very talented group of guys and basketball players, into the NCAA Tournament," he said. "That would make me feel like I've lived up to what I came here to accomplish." ■



Not long ago, Turner Gill was running Nebraska's vaunted offense. Now, he's helping run the lives of players who view him not only as a coach, but also a friend

Photo by Eric Francis

Keeping the Faith

by Chuck Green

Most Cornhusker football fans have seen the play dozens of times. A few of the more sadistic types have seen it well into the hundreds.

Turner Gill has seen it more than his share, too, but remembers it from a much different angle.

It was Jan. 2, 1984. The Huskers were trailing the Cinderella Miami Hurricanes 31-30 in the waning moments of the 50th Orange Bowl. I-back Jeff Smith had just scored on fourth down, and Nebraska was within reach of the national title so many expected to them to win that season.

Coach Tom Osborne decided to go for the win with a two-point conversion, brushing away any thought of kicking a sure extra-point and winning the title with a tie.

The play still haunts Husker fans everywhere:

Gill, Nebraska's quarterback that year — the trigger man for what many still believe to be the greatest college football offense ever assembled — takes the snap, rolls to his left and looks to throw. He fires just beyond the goal line, a little behind the waiting arms of Smith. Miami cornerback Kenny Calhoun tips the ball, which flutters harmlessly to the Orange Bowl turf, taking the Huskers' national championship with it.

It's no surprise Gill remembers the play vividly.

Surprisingly, though, he doesn't think about it very often. Actually, almost never.

"The only time I really think about it is when someone brings it up in an interview, or in the pregame show for the Orange Bowl," he said.

That night in 1984 was one of the darkest for Husker players, coaches and fans alike. But 11 years later, this past Jan. 1, Nebraska's 24-17 win over Miami in the last Orange Bowl game scheduled to be played in the old stadium brightened things a little. The win gave Osborne his first national championship, and gave Husker fans satisfaction of finally seeing the Hurricanes' thunder reduced to a grumble.

And, Gill said, it gave him some redemption.

"It was a great year to remember in all facets, not just because of the national championship," he said. "Seeing everybody just pull together with all the different types of distractions we had this year, on and off the field, was a great thing.

"Everybody, basically, just believed. The word this year was 'faith.'"

Faith has been a strong trait for Gill for a long time.

As a high school senior in Fort Worth, Texas, Gill was drafted by the Chicago White Sox, but chose to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln instead.

At Nebraska, Gill compiled an amazing 28-2 record as a starter. The two losses were to eventual national champions: Penn State in 1982 and Miami in the 1984 Orange Bowl. He never lost a game in the Big Eight, and earned All-Big Eight honors three years in a row.

During his four-year Husker career, Gill completed 231 of 428 passes for 3,317 yards and 34 touchdowns, and rushed for another 1,317 yards and 18 touchdowns to finish fourth on Nebraska's all-time total offense chart with 4,634 yards.

After exhausting his eligibility at Nebraska, Gill played for the Montreal Concordes of the Canadian Football League for two seasons, then moved on to baseball. He spent three years in the Cleveland Indians and Detroit Tigers minor league systems.

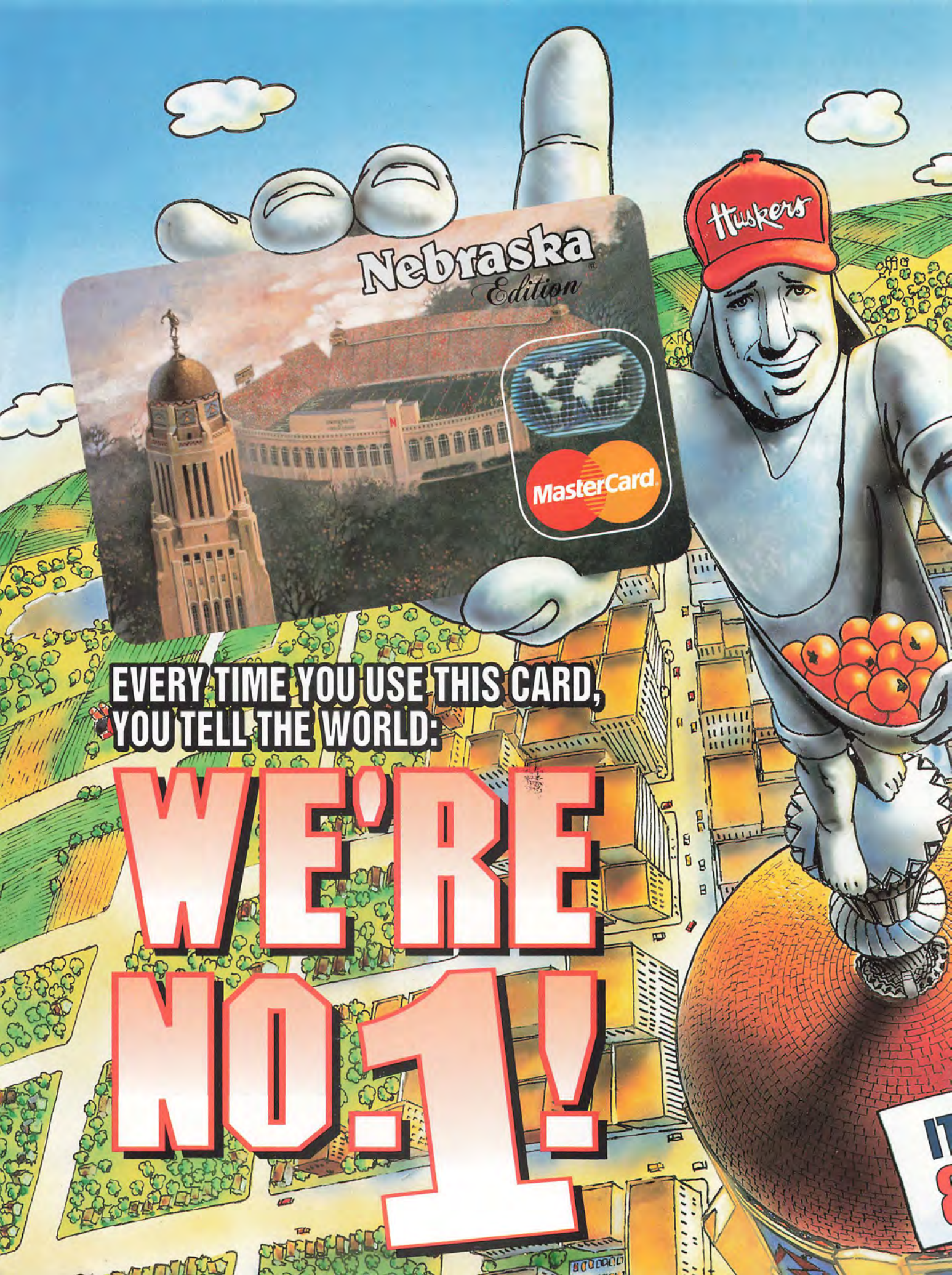
Gill said he sometimes misses athletic competition, but is satisfied with the way his football and baseball careers unfolded.

"God gave me a talent, and I used it to the best of my ability," he said. "Everybody has a certain point where sports ends. I was fortunate to get a stint in all of it. I had a chance to play pro football, pro baseball, college football and college baseball. So I can't say that I'm disappointed. I'm happy with the sports career I had."

Gill returned to Nebraska as a graduate assistant 1990 after a volunteer coaching stint at North Texas, where he earned his degree in behavioral analysis. In 1991, Gill was hired as the receivers coach at Southern Methodist University, which was rebuilding its football program after an NCAA-imposed "death penalty" — a two-year ban on the team from competition

Photo courtesy of Nebraska Sports Information

During the early 1980s, Turner Gill led Husker offenses that were among the best ever assembled. As a starter at Nebraska, Gill compiled a 28-2 record.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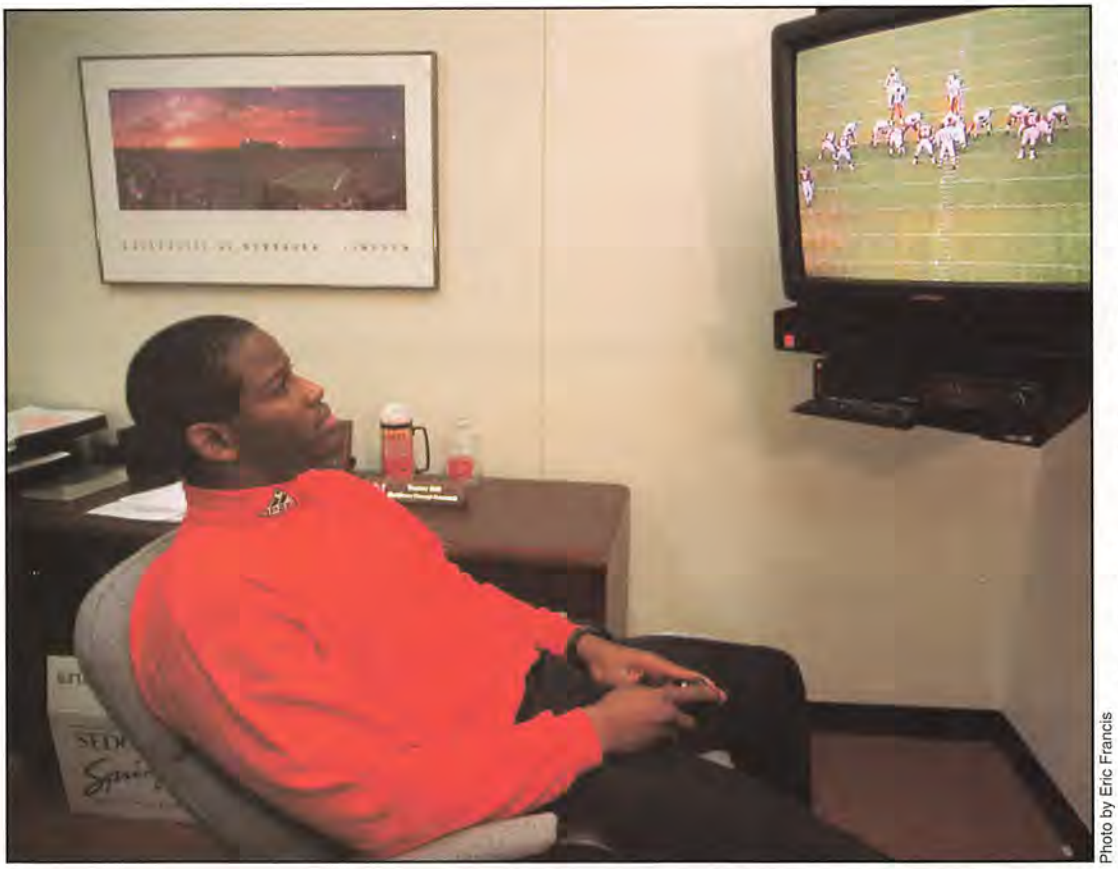

Photo by Eric Francis

because of repeated rules violations by the coaches and boosters of the school.

One year later, during a visit to Kearney to see his wife's family, Osborne offered him a job as a Husker assistant. The next day, he drove to Lincoln to look for a place to live, and has been there since.

He and his wife, Gayle, have two daughters: Jordan, 4, and Margeaux, 2.

For many Nebraska football fans, Gill will long be regarded as the standard by which Husker quarterbacks are measured. As a Husker coach and recruiter, he runs across many parents who remember him as Nebraska's quarterback in the early 1980s.

But most of the players have only heard of him.

"They know of me," he said, "but they really don't remember me. Most of them were pretty young kids when I played and they weren't that interested in college football back then."

Now that he's coaching young quarterbacks at Nebraska to do many of the same things he did as a Husker, Gill sometimes catches himself thinking back to his playing days.

"It feels good, though," he said. "I'm in the same environment as I was as a player, and we're running pretty much the same offense, so I'm very familiar with things. It makes it a lot easier for me to make the transition from player to coach ."

Although Gill said he is not striving to become a head coach, he admitted that he wants to coach for a long time.

His greatest satisfaction, he said, comes from having a strong impact on the players' lives, both on and off the field.

"I'm not only teaching the players about football, but I'm teaching them about life," Gill said. "Football was very important in my life, but it also taught me things about life and helped me prepare for the other side of life.

"That's really why I'm in coaching now."

For Gill, recruiting trips have opened his eyes to another world, one he knew existed but never was exposed to before.

"A lot of kids out there have it pretty rough," he said. "Many of them have one parent, some don't have any parents. Some of the homes we go visit, the kids are just staying there. Every human being should be able to go to some of these homes and see how things really are in some places."

As a result, Gill has become more than just a coach to many of the Husker players.

"There's a lot of things we are that are a lot more important than a football coach to a lot of these kids," he said. "A lot of times, we're their friend, we're their counselor, we're their psychologist. We really try to make them feel loved."

Gill said playing college football was easier during his playing days than now, given the number of current NCAA rules and regulations players and coaches now have to obey.

"When I was recruited, there definitely was not as many rules to have to look out for," he said. "But not only are there more rules, we keep getting our budgets cut back. We have to keep cutting back on the number of scholarships every year. We could have over 100 scholarship on the team when I was recruited, now it's 85. Since our rules change year to year, it's very difficult to stay by those rules.

"If we had a constant rule forever, we could abide by it with no problem. When it deviates every year, it makes it difficult. You don't even know when you're breaking a rule most of the time."

Now that recruiting season is over, Gill's attention is focused on spring practice, which is just a page away on the calendar. The media's biggest obsession during spring drills is sure to be the battle for the starting quarterback job, since Brook Berringer and Tommie Frazier — both starters in 1994 — return next season.

As quarterbacks coach, Gill again will be thrust into the spotlight. But he doesn't mind.

"I've learned to take whatever comes my way, and I think I do that pretty well," he said. "I just know things will work out, and I keep the faith no matter what.

"You've always got to have faith." ■

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On the Road Again . . . and Again

Alliance labors to earn respect among its Nebraska high school peers

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The trip is a necessary one. Traveling to play teams from North Platte High School, one of Alliance's rivals, is one of the few ways the Bulldogs can assure themselves of the respect that they deserve.

The athletes, coaches and fans associated with Alliance High School don't care how long it takes to get where they have to go to make their appearances on the athletic fields and arenas.

As Alliance Athletic Director Skip Olds said, it's a way of life anyone living in the Nebraska Panhandle is used to.

"It's simply a mindset," he said. "Our players know that they have to travel a long way to play games. They all know what they are dealing with."

Apparently, the distances traveled never bothered Olds and his Alliance Bulldogs.

Olds, the longtime Bulldog football coach who retired from the job in 1993 to resume full-time athletic director duties, piled up winning records at what was once the state's smallest Class A school.

Alliance, now participating in Class B after the Nebraska School Activities Association's 1994 reclassification, has been the pride of the Panhandle since Olds returned to the area in 1981.

"We've been very fortunate," Olds said. "We've gotten an opportunity to play against some of the best in the state, and have fared well against them."

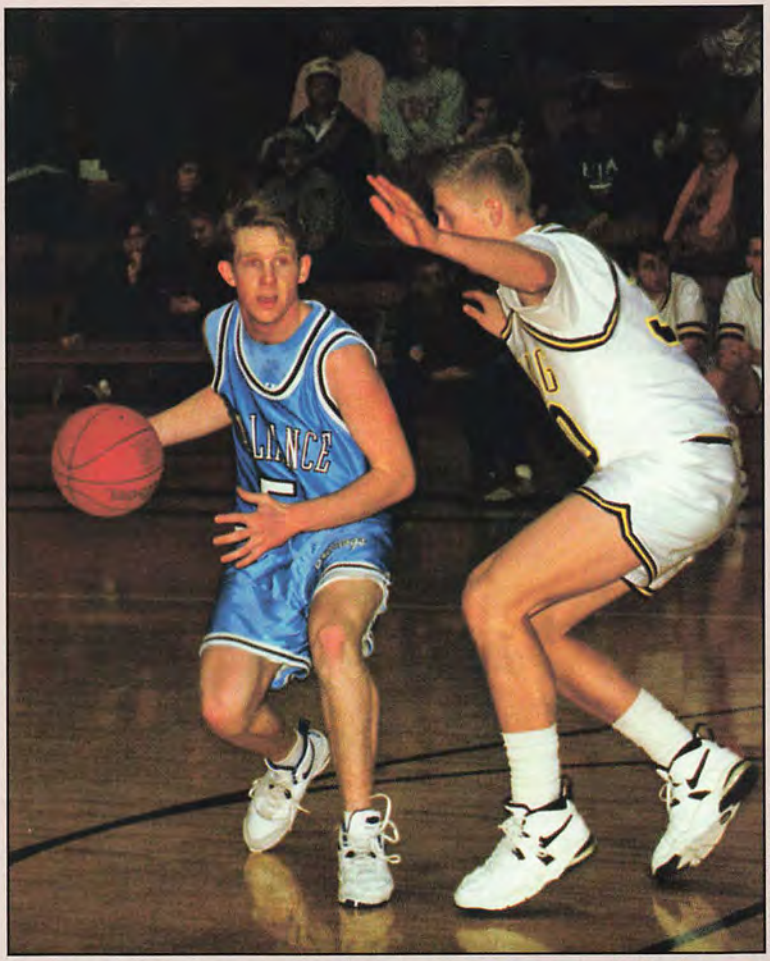
"I don't think there is any magic about what happened out here. I think it is just a lot of kids believing in themselves and coaches trying to help them be the best that they can possibly be."

Olds returned to his native, western Nebraska roots after a five-year stint at Millard High School, to pick up a struggling Alliance athletic program.

He moved it along by winning football games at a breakneck pace.

Olds directed the Bulldogs to five Class A state playoff appearances in his 12-year tenure as coach at the school. He resigned with a career record of 134-79-5, which includes an initial stint at Gordon High School.

While football success already trailed a fairly successful wrestling program, it is clear that football helped break the ground for



Photos by Rick Headley

Playing away from home has become a way of life for Alliance students, athletes and fans.

Alliance's athletic prosperity.

Bulldog wrestlers claimed the 1972 state title, but it wasn't until 1984 that the squad started making heads turn. Alliance finished as the Class B runner-up that season, and then won the state title in 1985. The Bulldogs followed up with state titles in 1986 and 1987.

The boys' basketball teams made state tournament appearances twice in the 1980s and twice again in the early 1990s. The team, now led by Coach Dave LaCari, has won the Western Conference title the last four years.

Jeff Tomlin, a former player and defensive coordinator for Olds at Alliance, took over the coaching duties in 1994. He took the Bulldogs to the Class B state playoffs with a 7-1 regular-season record.

Tomlin realizes that the Bulldogs, being in the western edge of the state and away from the main media outlets of Omaha and Lincoln, won't get the kind of press coverage schools in eastern Nebraska get.

But to him, like Olds, it doesn't matter.

"Skip always stressed the intrinsic factors rather than some of the ones that we couldn't control," Tomlin said. "I don't think it ever makes much difference to us if we get all the press and attention."

Alliance has a history of playing tough games with the big boys. The Bulldogs lost to Omaha Westside 21-3 during the 1991 playoffs, and dropped a 28-17 decision to eventual state champion Lincoln Southeast in 1992.

Olds and Tomlin agreed that they never have had the quantity or quality of players that the Creighton Preps and the Lincoln Southeasts possessed. But it has never hindered the Bulldogs preparation, or their belief, that they could compete at any level.

An example could be the Bulldogs' 24-16 loss to the Creighton Prep in the opening round of the 1989 Class A state playoffs in Omaha.

"Athletes are athletes, and we do have some over-achieving players out here," Tomlin said. "But some of the kids that we had just didn't match up with that Creighton Prep team very well. They just had us outmanned.

"But I think it reflects some good things about the work ethic of the kids in this area."

"I don't think there is any magic about what happened out here. I think it is just a lot of kids believing in themselves and coaches trying to help them be the best that they can possibly be." – Alliance High School Athletic Director Skip Olds

The rugged demeanor has been noticed by some college coaches as well. Many of Olds' former players have gone on to continue their football careers in college. Olds' son, Dustin, is a reserve quarterback at Nebraska Wesleyan, while former Alliance receiver Chad Thompson played football at the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

Even with the notoriety that winning has produced, some Bulldog followers still feel slighted.

"I think we've always kind of felt that way, a little bit," said Alliance businessman Dave Essay. "When you get past Kearney, people in the rest of the state kind of lose track of you."

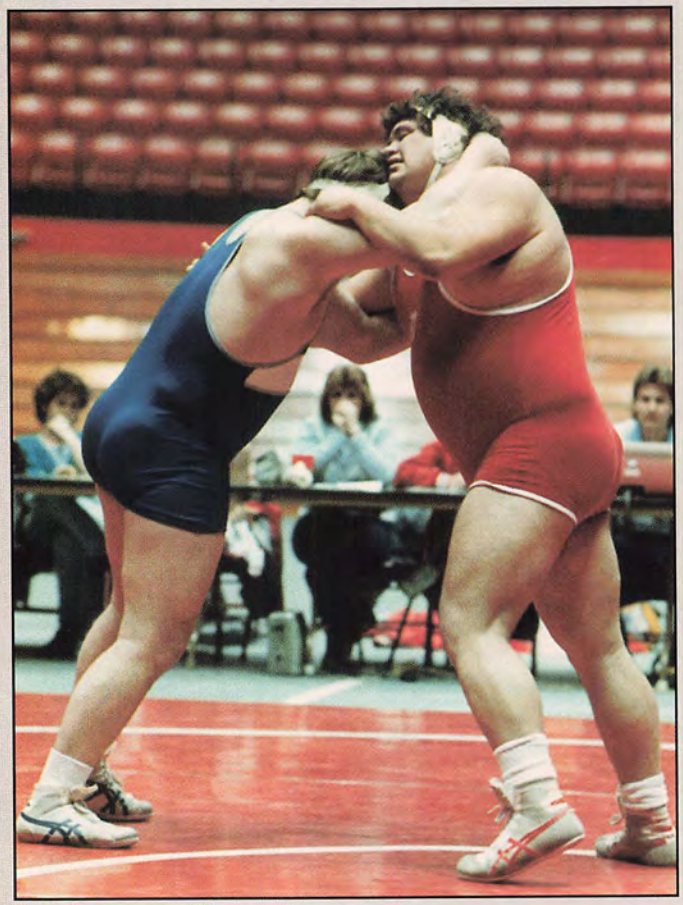
Essay, now a sales manager for Pepsi Cola Bottling in Alliance, is an Alliance graduate who lived through some of the football program's hard times.

"I remember we lost a JV game 93-0 when I was playing," Essay said. "I have to give credit where credit is due. Coach Olds turned this program around. It took some time, but he did it." NSN

Alliance fans are always behind their Bulldog teams, whether they're playing at home or on the road.

by Dan Silvia

ANOTHER GIANT IN JAPAN



HE'S NOT GODZILLA, although he's almost as big — or so it seems.

Former Cornhusker wrestler Gary Albright has taken over Japan, much like the mythical monster, as one of the top shoot wrestlers in the world.

Shoot wrestling is a combination of amateur-style wrestling and kickboxing.

"There are no pins," Albright said. "You win by knockout or submission."

In other words, wimps need not apply.

"Guys get hurt," he said. "But if you're going to throw leg kicks, you have to wear shin pads. If you're going to throw knees, you have to wear knee pads."

Standing 6-foot-3 and weighing 325 pounds, not only can Albright take the punishment, he can deliver his fair share as well. And his size makes him popular with Japanese fans.

"He's so huge that the Japanese people kind of fell in love with him," said Tim Neumann, Nebraska's wrestling coach. "He really is a big thing over there. I've talked to other people who have gone over with him. He can't walk down the street without getting mobbed."

Albright said his amateur wrestling experience gives him an edge over most of his opponents.

"It's a great advantage," he said. "The Japanese tend to be more into the fighting – the hitting and the kicking. If I can take them down, then I can pretty much

Former Cornhusker wrestler Gary Albright is too much for most opponents, but Japanese fans can't get enough of him.

Photo by Koji Miyamoto

control the match."

A back suplex is still Albright's best move, Neumann said.

"(It's) the same one he used to do in college," he said. "He gets around behind the guy and just does a back suplex. He locks the guy up gets him up on his chest and just throws him straight over his back."

Albright wrestled at Nebraska from 1981 through 1986, redshirting one year. As the Huskers' heavyweight wrestler, he placed seventh at the NCAA Tournament in 1982, second in 1984 and third in 1986. He finished his career at Nebraska with a 112-19-4 record, including a school-record 68 pins.

He travels to Japan about once every six weeks for a match, then returns to his home to Pensacola, Fla., where he usually takes at least a week off before resuming his training schedule.

"I've been pretty lucky I haven't had any serious injuries," Albright said. "I do a lot of cardiovascular work on the Stairmaster, (and go) biking swimming."

Albright had one of his biggest matches yet on Jan. 16, against champion Leon White. He lost the match, but not necessarily because he was out-wrestled.

"This guy came out just covered with Ben Gay or something," Albright said. "I went to throw the guy and couldn't get a hold of him. I just slipped all over the place."

After the match, Albright

Photo by Koji Miyamoto

Albright throws Dennis Koslowski during a 1993 match in Osaka, Japan.

confronted the referee, who only offered an apology.

"I got pretty aggressive with him," Albright said.

While wrestling of any sort requires a certain amount of aggression, Neumann said, Albright is much different off the mat — at least now.

"At the beginning of his career, he was aggressive off the mat and kind of a wimp on the mat," he said. "He gained more confidence in himself as a person and he became more of a gentleman off the mat, and allowed his aggressions to come out on the mat. He kind of did a whole role reversal. He was like the big teddy bear on the team."

Finding a workout partner for a 300-pound-plus college athlete can be a difficult task. At 190 pounds, Neumann was the second-largest person in Nebraska's wrestling room, so the assignment often fell on his shoulders — literally.

"I got a big fat ear sticking out of the side of my head from him hitting me in the head every day," Neumann said. "My body is about 10 years older than it would be because of him."

Albright teamed with brothers Jim and Bill Scherr to form one of the most imposing upper-weight lineups in college wrestling. Jim won the NCAA title at 177 pounds in 1984, while Bill claimed the 190-pound crown and Albright was second in the heavyweight class. Together they were known as Murderers' Row.

"It was a lot of fun. We all three won the Big Eight tournament that year," recalled Jim Scherr, now the executive director of USA Wrestling. "Somebody coined the phrase Murderers' Row. It was a takeoff of the original Murderers' Row of the Yankees, but it seems more appropriate in wrestling. People were intimidated in dual meets. It put a lot of pressure on the other team in the lower weights."

Neumann said Albright and the Scherrs helped put a face on Nebraska wrestling.

"I think those three guys were the first ones to bring an identity to the program," he said. "I don't know if there has ever been three more dominant guys on the same team back to back. These three guys were just awesome."

The Scherr brothers also had a chance to work out with Albright.

"It wasn't what you might think," said Jim Scherr. "I think he kind of took it easy on you in situations where he might otherwise have been able to squash you like a bug. For someone as big as Gary was, he was very skilled athletically. He was a good workout partner in that respect.

"He's still pretty imposing – actually more imposing now." NSM

"He gained more confidence in himself as a person and he became more of a gentleman off the mat, and allowed his aggressions to come out on the mat. He kind of did a whole role reversal. He was like the big teddy bear on the team." - NU Coach Tim Neumann

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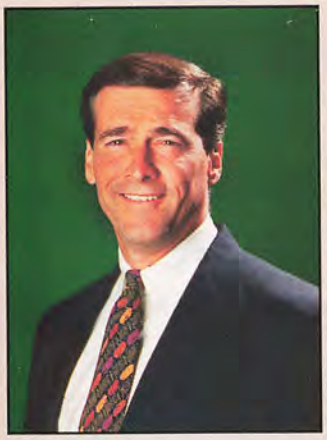


McCartney Buffaloed No One

NOW THAT THE EXCITEment of Nebraska's national championship has settled down a bit, I'd like to comment on another remarkable story that may be lost to some of us in all the celebrating.

Coinciding with Tom Osborne's accomplishment was the departure of another very successful Big Eight Conference coach who many in Nebraska loved to hate. Colorado's Bill McCartney is gone.

After Colorado's drubbing of Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl, Coach Mac disappeared. He followed through on the surprise announcement he had made earlier in the season and gave it all up, long-term contract included.

Most Cornhusker fans probably would say, "Good riddance." After all, McCartney was the coach who had the audacity to label Nebraska as the Buffaloes' designated rival.

When McCartney took over, Colorado's football team already had lost 14 consecutive games to Nebraska. That number grew to a pitiful 18 four years later. At the time, it seemed presumptuous to even think of raising Colorado's football program to Nebraska's level of play.

And yet, as distasteful as that may have been to fans around here, it happened.

I watched from an excited press box at Folsom Field in 1986 as McCartney's team brazenly outplayed the likes of Broderick Thomas and Steve Taylor. Cheering is not allowed where the media view the game, but this time the rule was all but ignored by members of the Colorado press. A Big Red nightmare was unfolding before everyone's eyes.

Colorado's designated rival was going down.

ABC-TV had no interest in televising that game, but it was such a shocking upset that the network hastily put together a live satellite interrupt in the final minutes and screamed the news to the rest of the country: Colorado had ended almost two decades of Husker dominance.

Three seasons later, McCartney's Buffaloes celebrated their first national championship. He hadn't been presumptuous at all, it turned out. He succeeded in turning a pushover program into a national power.

I've heard Nebraska fans who would rather not acknowledge these accomplishments. They instead scoff at the troubles McCartney's recruits had with the law, or point to the infamous fifth-down play that won the game against Missouri. It's their choice.

But let's go beyond that to what I think is truly remarkable about Bill McCartney. There's an old adage often heard in sports that says one has to "walk the talk." McCartney does.

He doesn't just profess his Christian faith, and it's hard to imagine a more difficult test than he experienced at the beginning of the 1988 season. As he managed the daily trials of coaching, McCartney was staggered by the news that his unmarried daughter was pregnant. The expectant father was the star player of Colorado's team, quarterback Sal Aunese.

Public knowledge made it a scarlet letter, and McCartney's aching heart nearly burst with the subsequent disdain shown his daughter by Aunese. Imagine what your response would be in a similar situation.

McCartney chose to embrace his daughter and her baby while giving Aunese his continued support. It wasn't to selfishly ensure a winning season, but to confer the same grace that he himself had received with his commitment to Christ.

The fiery coach forgave.

As most people know, Aunese's life ended in a losing battle with stomach cancer. But only after numerous bedside visits from his coach. Football brought the two men together. Unconditional love bonded them.

Now it's another bond shaping McCartney's life. He set aside his passion for football in devotion to his wife, Lyndi. Again, he's walking the talk.

Several years ago, McCartney co-founded a ministry directed toward men called Promise Keepers. It's an outreach program designed to teach men how to lead their families from a servant's perspective. The fact that 50,000 men drawn by this paradox would pack a stadium in Boulder, Colo., underscored the void felt in our society today. McCartney is not only preaching, he's applying the message in his own personal life.

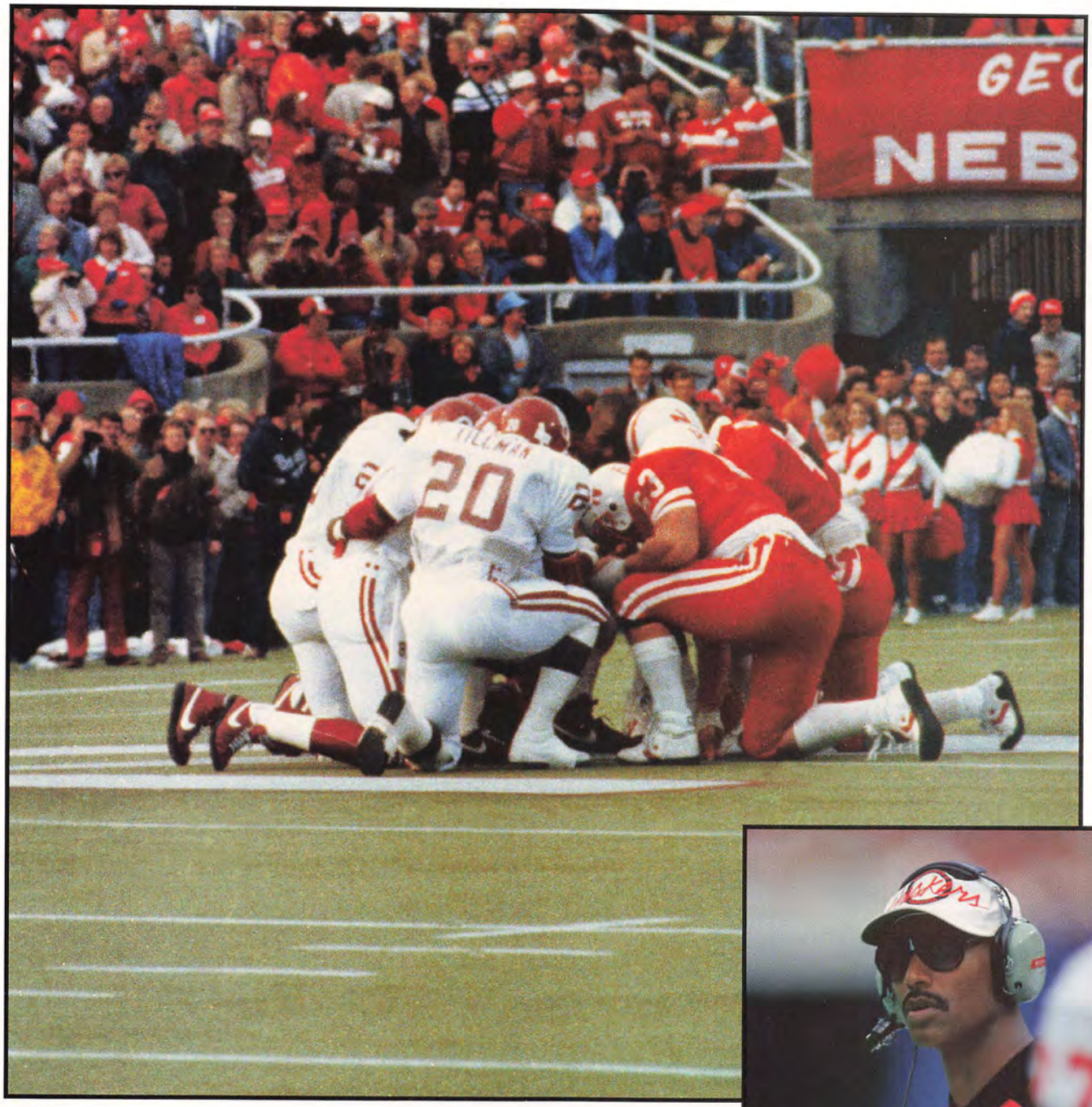
His wife is a higher priority than football and he's demonstrated that by giving up one for the other. It was necessary for her sake.

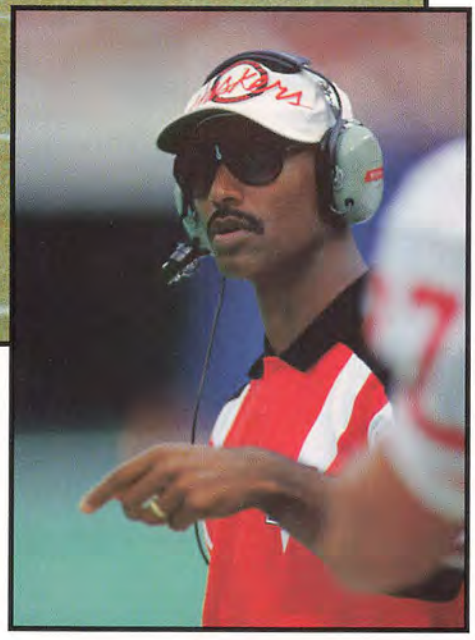
Contrast that with another nationally known coach who chose football when the opportunity presented itself. He actually divorced his wife to marry the pursuit of Super Bowl championships.

It seems shallow by comparisons.

So this is the legacy McCartney leaves behind. There is much more to the man than we were able to see on the sideline. Our view may have been clouded by his stated intentions to beat Nebraska, which he did three times. He should get credit for that. But more importantly, he should be commended for walking the talk in matters of much greater significance. NSM

But let's go beyond that to what I think is truly remarkable about Bill McCartney. There's an old adage often heard in sports that says one has to "walk the talk." McCartney does.





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